

**My Mother, My Best Friend: An Exploration of the
Mother-Daughter Relationship as Friendship.**

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Abstract

This study focuses on the mother-daughter relationship conceptualised as friendship and explores the ways in which this conceptualisation articulates with broader concerns of feminine subjectivity. Using Denzin's (2001) interpretive interactionism as a framework for in-depth interviews, women's own talk about their mother-daughter relationships was analysed. Friendship implies a relationship of choice and equality rather than the traditional asymmetries of power typical of mother-daughter dynamics and the participants asserted this characteristic as the defining feature of their relationships. Their understanding of this rubric of friendship was analysed in terms of three primary themes: 1) Talk constructs and maintains particular levels of intimacy between mother and daughter, disclosing the self to the other; 2) This form of interaction is gendered, only possible between women. Fathers in particular are positioned predominantly within a discourse of 'absence' or 'emotional defectiveness' and this seems to provide a gendered counterpoint to the exclusive intimacy shared between mother and daughter; and 3) The ostensibly equal form of the relationship conceals patterns of regulation, in particular certain forms of self-regulation. Women are encouraged by social structures such as tradition, culture, religion and so forth to regulate themselves in ways that keep feminine subjectivity as 'nice' and 'good'. In these ways, the conceptualisation of the mother-daughter relationship as 'friendship' affords both women important measures of relational support, challenging more masculine versions of parenting, generational authority and the centrality of autonomy and separation in the developmental process. However, in parallel with these positive shifts, the relationship thus conceptualised also serves to conceal relations of power and the explicit gendering of these forms of relating may further entrench an already naturalised female/ male duality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores female subjectivity specifically in relation to a particular conceptualisation of the mother-daughter relationship. The study began with an identification of my own mother as 'best friend' and is an attempt to theorise what it means for mothers/ daughters to be positioned in this way. All the participants in this study explicitly identified their mother/ daughter as their 'best friend'. Within this conceptualisation they fulfil the role of friend to their mother/ daughter and claim this role as a unique characteristic of their particular relationship. This quality of friendship is seen as differentiating their relationship both from other mother-daughter relationships and from other relationships (including particularly familial relationships) in their lives.

The primary ambit for this research is to engage with what it means for women to conceptualise this relationship in this way; what this exploration can reveal about gender generally, feminine subjectivity specifically and the relationships that women share with others. Furthermore, although this is a project primarily about mothers and daughters, it also follows another (critical) line that seeks out the way in which female subjectivity is conceptualised within developmental psychology and aims to explore understandings of identity and destabilise already fixed notions of self-hood and femininity.

The project aims to engage with the binding and unifying categories of 'mother' and 'daughter'. Theories about the nature of healthy female subjectivity are embedded within developmental texts about mothering, and seminal works produced by theorists such as Freud, Erikson, Bowlby and Winnicott have had far-reaching implications for how female subjectivity has been conceptualised. These theories have provided (and continue to provide) enduring representations of mothering that reduce identity for women to the single categories of either 'mother' or 'daughter' and assert identification, separation and

deindividuation as key factors for women's 'healthy development' (Chodorow, 1978). Burman (1994) argues that "'Sensitive' and 'insensitive' mothers are produced by theories of maternal 'sensitivity', both through the incorporation of the theories within professional and policy structures and through women's consumption of those ideas" (p. 84). This project takes as its general ambit particular theorisations that connect with women's talk about their mother-daughter relationships and, in particular, seeks to explore how embedded assumptions about 'sensitive mothering' traverse interactions shared between mother and daughter.

Developmental psychology has prioritised the subject of child development and mothering to such an extent that the subjective position of 'woman' within the social role of 'mother' has been lost (de Kanter, 1993). Macleod (2001) argues that developmental literature in South Africa has typically defined the mother-child relationship in a dyadic way. Within this positioning the "mother's influence is foregrounded, and isolated from its contextual background. This serves to obscure the relationships that surround and involve infants and young children and their mothers, as well as the context and the sexualised relationship within which women become pregnant" (Macleod, 2001, p. 498). An exploration of how women choose to talk about this relationship is particularly useful for it begins with women's own understandings of this relationship as friendship to provide an entry point to explore this relationship outside of the traditional dyad. Furthermore, although this project starts with women as mothers and daughters, an exploration of social structures and processes is imperative in order to connect this dyadic relationship to the wider social context as structured by culture, religion, tradition, politics and so forth.

This research is a response to what appears to be a gap in South African literature on mothering and daughtering. Macleod (2001) indicates that there has been a "general paucity of feminist ideas in psychology in South Africa" (p. 497). This research takes a

feminist approach in that it uses the understanding that “gender is a basic organising principle that profoundly shapes the concrete conditions of our lives” (Kvale, 1996, p. 73). Representations of female subjectivity within developmental psychology texts are more inclined to present women either as mothers or as women who have been mothered themselves, in either situation there is a space still relatively unexplored wherein understandings about gendered subjectivity outside of these roles requires further theorising and thinking. This study is an attempt to explore how some women are reconceptualising this relationship (and their gender) for themselves.

The account generated seeks to connect the ways in which women understand and talk about their relationship as friendship to broader social structures that produce and reproduce domestic relationships (Burman, 1994). An analysis of this kind must therefore take seriously the social arrangements of gender that constitute the mother-daughter relationship as friendship. To this end, this study also offers an exploration of assumptions about fathering (and concomitant gendered constructions of roles and relationships) that forms an important contextual counterpoint for the mother-daughter relationship.

The work produced by Valerie Walkerdine & Helen Lucey (1989) provides the impetus that encourages feminist scholars to examine the connections between what appear to be private and individual selves (mothers and daughters) and social structures such as democracy and attendant practices of regulation. In this project it is argued that women today are still highly regulated and continue to self-regulate as normative roles of mothering rely heavily on this regulation. Indeed, it is argued that the continued state of ‘friendship’ for mother and daughter relies on a particular social context that necessitates regulation; where there is friendship (read equality) overt attempts to control one another do not seem legitimate.

It is suggested that this is an indication of how female subjectivity is currently constituted within a discourse of rights and access. Being a friend is about particular kinds of subjectivities, where 'good' people can be considered one's friend, with the converse being that those people who display traditional (hierarchical) forms of authority are not friends. To declare that a person is your friend is to suggest that there are forms of equality between two people and so it follows that good relationships are defined as friendship in that the participants are equals. Friendship is an indication of good, healthy selves having good, healthy relationships with others. Friendship is the (post) modern articulation of shifts in subjectivity where selves self-regulate, self-monitor, and attempt to work on their-self (Lawler, 2000; Rose, 1999).

Lawler (2000) argues that "knowledges about the self, about mothering, about childhood, about the mother-daughter relationship, do not, as it were, fall from the sky: rather they are produced and reproduced in specific relations of social and political power, and in response to specific social and political preoccupations" (p. 3). Focussing on women's own 'talk' and knowledge of themselves in the mother-daughter relationship, should not be to the exclusion of the wider social context. This newer conceptualisation of mother-daughter relationships as friendship indicates a shift towards raising children by child-centred methods, where the self takes centre stage, and regulation is internalised and we are all encouraged to 'work on our selves' (Rose, 1999).

The project therefore explicitly attempts to connect current discourses of women's equality, education and changing gendered roles within the positioning of one's mother as 'friend'. This theme of equality through friendship is situated in the rubric of democracy and rights. Furthermore, women's new possibilities for education and newly available spaces in the labour market are products of a 'new democracy' in South Africa. These shifts make it possible for women to assert themselves as equals to their mothers (women who traditionally have been authority figures in children's lives). It is

acknowledged that not all women everywhere are able to make the same kinds of claims to equality and spaces in the labour market. However, it is argued that for these women, being well educated afford them this possibility.

Rose (1999) suggests that the post-modern world offers new fluidity in the process of recreating ourselves: "Contemporary human beings, that is to say, inhabit a network of assemblages which presuppose, fabricate and stabilise particular versions of self" (p.265). In this context, shifting gendered networks and a measure of increased freedom for women makes it possible for the subjects of this study to negotiate subjectivity in a particular narrative construction of their relationships with their mothers/daughters. Narrating the self in these terms is quite evidently not an individual exercise and for these women, talk (as in conversation between equals) plays a particularly pivotal role in the construction of the mother-daughter relationship.

It is suggested that *in this moment*, it is in this space of South African democracy that women can negotiate, although not uniformly, the terms of relating with others and to oneself. Today, South African women are located within a particular political climate that emphasises individual human rights and in particular, the rights of women and it is suggested that it is this context that makes it possible for women to claim their mothers are their best friends. It is within the possibility for equality as a woman's right, a reconceptualising of mothers as 'open', not closed can be theorised, indeed this is what makes mothers feel *like friends*. The women in this study suggest repeatedly, and in varying ways that the key difference between *their* mother-daughter relationship and 'others' is their ability to be open to their mothers/ daughters. It is suggested that this openness is actually about talk and disclosure between mother and daughter and functions to produce not only forms of 'equal' relating but also levels of intimacy that make disclosure possible.

However, it is further argued that talk not only serves to connect women and equalise the relationship between mother and daughter but also serves to create new parameters for regulation. As Rose (1999) argues, the ostensible increase in 'freedoms' produce new imperatives for self-regulation: "there are certain costs to the obligation to assemble one's own identity as matter of one's freedom...in the obligation to render one's everyday existence meaningful as an outcome of choices made, one's relation with oneself is tied ever more firmly to the ethics of individual autonomy and personal authenticity" (p. 272). The project uses women's own talk of their mother-daughter relationship to theorise how expressions of individual autonomy and the regulation of possible selves emerges within the discourse of equality. The possibilities for conceptualising the mother-daughter relationship as friendship are mediated by the context in which it is located and this construction paradoxically augments rather than contradicts the autonomous individuated orientation of contemporary society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Female identity is often defined almost exclusively in terms of the role of mother and her relationship with her children. Furthermore, female identity is considered culminating at the end-point of motherhood, and at this point identity is considered as final, and 'complete'. There is, therefore a need to address the role of the mother from a developmental perspective that explores all the ways that being a woman neither begins nor ends with becoming a mother. This study will address some key identity theories that represent female identity as linear and fixed, and will explore what relational understandings of identity can offer in reconceptualising these fixed and linear understandings of what constitutes feminine identity.

Developmental psychology often represents mother-child relationships in ways that decontextualise the child, as well as the child's mother, and focus attention on an abstract individual entity (Burman, 1994). It is argued that female identity, understood from a point of view that embraces the assumptions of a relational identity, cannot be reduced to either role of mother or daughter. Theory generated around a gendered identity generally presents (through attachment theory) representations of women engaged in the process of identification and individuation from their mothers. Women are presented as either fused with, or in a process of separation from their mothers. By contrast, mothers are predominantly presented in ways that represent them as primary caregivers to children. Furthermore, being a mother is definitively about being a *particular* kind of mother. In 'Winnicottian' or 'Bowlbyism' (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989) terms, mothers are destined to be either 'sensitive mothers' or 'bad mothers'. Care for children is represented as the ultimate role for women and women as natural caregivers to children because they are biologically the best 'fit' for children's needs. Embedded within these care giving

discourses are assumptions that the end-goal of all mothering should be to produce autonomous and independent children through the development of attachment, identification and separation within the mother/daughter relationship. This research begins with a question about the way in which this relationship may be reconceptualised. This question works as an entry point to explore how women themselves choose to talk about this relationship and seeks out the connections that this relationship has with other relationships in the wider social structures of these women's lives.

2.2 Identity: An Unfinished Project

Typically, identity is understood as linked to changes in the sequential development from child to adult as argued by theorists such as Erikson (1968). The establishment of a 'healthy' identity is the result of successful *individual* development. Identity is cast as a set of fixed stages that must be negotiated, with predetermined outcomes, in order to arrive at a particular place known as 'autonomy' or 'maturity'. Identity is the product of movement through milestones that render identity as something that must be individually attained. Those who have not yet passed through the set of identity crises remain outside the parameters of what constitute 'normal' and 'healthy' identities. Mkhize (2006) is critical of the conceptualisation of identity within modern Euro-American societies: "Self understanding is characterised by an increasing differentiation of the self from the social and cultural world. Identity formation involves the discovery of one's inner essence" (p. 188). In this understanding, 'healthy' identities are those that have separated from others, connection is a state of pre-formation, a stage where one is yet to have reached healthy autonomy.

However, Slugoski & Ginsburg (1989) suggest that Eriksonian identity in particular proved useful in its time for the social dimension that it enabled scholars to add to personality theory. Eriksonian identity connects people's choices with social demands

and context to some or other 'moratorium'. In many ways, Erikson's theory of identity was a response to the theory of psychoanalysis in its time and proved useful in that it indicated a shift socially in theorising the self (Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989). This shift was however considerably limited in its conceptualisation of the social. Sampson (1989) argues that Erikson presents the ego as "an integrated whole" (p. 14) whilst Slugoski & Ginsburg (1989) argue that it is "predicated upon an impoverished and highly delimited conception of society...that its ultimate reliance on internal ego-integrative processes results in a normative model of identity that is class-, race-, and sex bound" (pp. 36-37). Sampson (1989) argues that identity theory typically asserts a natural subject that is a whole and completely integrated entity. To counter this argument, Sampson proposes a critical engagement of self-hood as necessary to destabilise prevalent understandings of the "bounded self" (Geertz, 1979 cited in Sampson, 1989, p. 1). The conceptualisation that human beings are 'self-contained' and separate individuals with an essential, underlying base is a myth deeply ingrained in modern Euro-American societies and perpetuates notions of independent control and action in the world (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998). "The concept of the person as a relatively autonomous self-contained and distinctive universe is said to reflect the sham and the illusion that is the bourgeois individual, not its reality" (Sampson, 1989, p. 3).

Conceptualising identity as a singular, attainable state further implies that a failure to 'reach' identity is the failure of an individual, thus rendering that person with a "psychological deficit" (Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989, p. 39). A failure to reach successful independence in one's identity would imply a necessary 'fixing' through therapeutic intervention. It is therefore necessary to shift understandings of identity formation from being the 'end-product' of an adolescent individual and assert rather that identity is a process on a "continuum of psychological adjustment" throughout the lifespan (*Ibid.*, p. 39). Identity as any fixed and stable quality must be questioned and re-conceptualised in ways that allow for the multiple ways in which we experience our 'selves'. Billington,

Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) offer a way of theorising the self outside of the fixed and static quality of identity that is they offer an account of identity that is located outside the fixed nature of “life cycle” theory. According to Billington et al. (1998), the use of the word lifecycle in traditional development theory describes the movement from birth to death through stages based primarily on the criteria of age. Counterposed to this Billington et al. (1998) offer the phrase “life transitions” (p.59) to denote the negotiated nature of passage through life that explores the development of identity through connectedness with others in social roles.

Billington et al. (1998) argue that in negotiating a role in society, we are not attempting to negotiate a space already circumscribed and ready to be filled, but rather that “in transitions between social roles, positions or status- youth to adult, wife to widow- our movement is always in relation to others, who themselves are also in transition” (p. 64). The understanding of social roles in transition assists us to explore how identity is constituted and should not imply that there is any sense of ongoing stability (as roles may imply). Billington et al. (1998) make use of Van Gennep’s concept of liminality to describe how movement between roles is possible, but always “liminal” (p.68), that in any movement between roles there is inherent “change and ambiguity” (*Ibid.*, p. 68). Identity is a constant negotiation of the social role we construct, enact and move between. Our roles are boundaried and marked by periods of transition. This understanding is in contrast to an Eriksonian version of identity. In this post-modern understanding of identity, identity is an ongoing project, never finished and always negotiated in and through connection with others (who are engaged in a process of identity negotiation).

Taylor (1989) eloquently shows how it is that people are positioned within a social framework:

“But in fact our identity is deeper and more many-sided than any of our possible articulations of it...The question ‘Who?’ is asked to place someone as potential

interlocutor in a society of interlocutors. 'Who is this speaking?' we say over the phone. Or, 'Who is that?' pointing to someone across the room. The answer comes in the form of a name: "I'm Joe Smith". Often accompanied by a statement of social role: "It's the repair man"... But to be able to answer for oneself is to know where one stands, what one wants to answer. And that is why we naturally tend to talk of our fundamental orientation in terms of who we are... And this orientation, once attained, defines where you answer from, hence your identity" (p.29).

For Taylor, being able to refer to one's self relies on being able to speak about who one is in relation to one's social positioning as a '*someone*' to others. Self-reference cannot be conceived only as it relates to oneself, positioning identity within a social framework is therefore imperative for understanding the nature of the self.

Similar to Taylor (1989), Fay (1996) argues that the self cannot be conceived of as any unified entity for the act of self-reflecting implies being able to reflect on oneself through distance and for this "you must have some detachment from yourself" (p. 33). Fay (1996) argues that, "selfhood involves self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is one of the keys which makes you a different sort of entity from a lamp or protein. To be self-conscious is to be aware of oneself as an entity capable of being other than what it is" (p.34). The action inherent in being self-conscious necessarily implies a particular layeredness to the organisation of our selves. To this, Fay (1996) adds that there can be no single underlying *unity* in the self as, "the self is continuously being created and recreated in interaction with others as the agent reflexively employs self-referring utterances and first-person pronouns. This suggests that selfhood is an achievement made possible only by developing the skill of reflexively self referring" (p. 39). To talk about the self in relation to a social framework is not to refer simply to a relationship of influence, but rather that this relationship is constitutive, we are social selves created in and through a network of relationships with other selves that are social. Fay (1996) argues that "so permeable is

[the self] that not only are you not separate from others but rather others are part of you... many of the ideas and attitudes which comprise what you are derive from others” (pp. 39-40).

Similarly, Sampson (1989) argues that, “we do not begin with two independent realities, individual and society that are otherwise formed and defined apart from one another and that interact as though each were external to the other. Rather, society constitutes and inhabits the very core of whatever passes for personhood: each is interpenetrated by its other” (p. 4). Our identities and our social contexts are *constitutive of each other* rather than merely mutually influencing and more significantly a theory of identity must be “subject to a radical historicization” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Further to this historicization, Hall (1996) asserts that it is not enough to theorise the influence of culture on identity as that which is shared between people in some form of communality or mutual relationship of influence. For this study, identity is explored along the thinking that “identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (*Ibid.*, p. 4). A theorising of identity outside of traditional (positivist) discourses of boundedness and singularity implies that not only are our identities produced within specific historical locations, but also that the production of identities always exists in *relation to others*.

Jordan (1993) asserts that a particularly gendered relational understanding of self “emphasises the contextual, approximate, responsiveness and process factors in experience... It emphasises relationship and connection” (p. 138). This re-conceptualisation calls into question the traditional assumption that ‘healthy identities’ are those identities independent of others, and is expressed as ‘autonomy’ in the individual; a relational understanding of identity goes further than describing selves as in relation with or connection to others. In particular, Jordan (1993) argues that it “goes

beyond saying that women value relationships; we are suggesting that the deepest sense of one's being is continuously formed in connection with others and is inextricably tied to relational movement" (p. 138). Our sense of self cannot be disconnected from the social interactions through which we are all discursively constituted and mediated. Hall (1996) argues that an understanding of self as fragmented and relational does not necessarily make for a broken self, or a senseless self as the "decentering of the self is not the destruction of the subject" (p. 13).

For Billington et al. (1998), the social mediation of roles is crucial for it assists us in further understanding the development of a gendered identity: "seeing identities in terms of patterns of roles and relationships connects them to social expectations. It also draws attention to the way they are constructed out of social action. It is people, who create or change roles, and however strong social expectations may be, people are continually rewriting the scripts" (p. 50). Our social roles are constituted in and mediated by the cultural and social contexts within which we are located.

Dominant ideologies about gender continue to shape the particular roles that people are able to negotiate. It is important at this point to assert that not all men or women, girls or boys, are positioned in the same way, and certainly these positions can be (and often are) resisted. However, dominant ideologies about gender continue to circulate and shape, penetrate and constitute social roles available to women. In a psychoanalytic understanding, male and female identities, shaped through interactions with the mother, differ. Lawler (2000) argues that "during the boy's Oedipus complex...he represses his erotic attachment to his mother; he also represses his desire for connection. This results in a male personality structure which prizes autonomy and individuality, desires dominance, and fears connection and unity with the 'other'" (p. 52). Unlike boys, girls are not able to resolve this complex in the same way and it is because of this that girls ostensibly develop a relational sense of self. This relational sense of self is a product of identifying

with their mothers (Lawler, 2000). A gendered identity appears inevitable, as “men want autonomy, while women want connection” (*Ibid.*, p. 52). This dichotomised division between male autonomy and female connection is erroneous in terms of the above analysis of *all* identity construction as relational and serves to normalise and naturalise gendered roles.

2.3 (Re)producing Gender

For girls, development is markedly different from boys in that girls must both identify with and separate from their mothers. Chodorow (1978) argues that this developmental task of identification, which occurs in terms of the counter processes of separation and individuation, is what makes this process particularly ‘female’ in its dynamic. For boys the formation of an identity is apparently based on a need to separate from their mothers through difference. In this way, the son exists in relation to his mother as ‘not female’, furthermore the ego boundaries that are established are necessarily rigid and on the basis of ‘different from’ rather than ‘sameness’, as is the case for daughters (Schreurs, 1993). Locating the development of femininity of girls in the processes of identification and separation works to make mothers not only responsible for such femininity in their daughters, but also situates women as responsible for satisfying the drives and wants of her daughter. Mother and daughter are locked into a process of tension between identification (as daughters must fuse with their mothers) and separation if they are to develop healthy psyches (Lawler, 2000). Within Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the mother is located as the centre of meeting children’s unfulfilled desires and wishes. There are differences within this tradition around *how* those wishes are filled, or even if they *can* be fulfilled. Object relations theorists for example, assert that mothers are central, indeed pivotal for daughters to develop healthy feminine psyches (Lawler, 2000). When daughters do not ‘reach’ whatever passes for healthy femininity it is mothers who must be accountable for this.

Psychoanalysis also offers explanations around the nature of children's wishes as 'un-gratifiable' as Lawler (2000) argues: "What the girl requires of her mother, according to this explanatory framework, is an impossible plenitude...a demand which expresses an un-fulfillable desire...the mother *cannot* provide the love which the infant desires" (p. 32). Significant for this study are the ways in which daughters' desires, indeed *demands* made on mothers may never really be satisfied. In as much as identity is relational, and the construction of femininity is located in and through the relationship between mother and daughter, the formation of whatever counts for a healthy psyche appears to be deeply seated in whatever interactions mother and daughter share. Whether we approach this from a specifically psychoanalytic school of thought, or whether we use broader relational understandings of identity to do this, the mother remains pivotal in theorising about how *feminine* identity is constituted.

It must be asserted that this study does not take a narrowly psychoanalytic point of view for its theoretical framework, however it offers a useful paradigmatic framework for theorising of children's needs and mothers' obligations to them. Mothers are represented as pivotal in the production of all 'healthy psyches'. Lawler (2000) asserts that "the underlying propositions remain the same: that mothers produce (gendered selves); that the social world could be transformed through the transformation of these selves; and, therefore that it is mothering which can and should transform the social world" (Lawler, 2000, p. 51). Moreover, a conceptualising of feminine desire within a psychoanalytic framework explores the ways in which daughters' demands on mothers far outweigh the demands daughters place on fathers. These demands not only indicate that relationships at home are based on gendered interactions, but these interactions also indicate a prevalent patriarchal family system model (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2004). In this model, mothers respond to the emotional and domestic needs of the home (and the people

in it) while fathers are afforded the 'breadwinning' responsibility and their influence is reduced to their ability to be providers.

Macleod (2001) argues that understandings around mothering within South African literature assert a deeply problematic version of mothering (and by effect fathering): "These discourses centre around mothering as 1) essentially a dyadic relationship, 2) a task that requires a certain level of competence or skill, 3) a pathway to adulthood for females and 4) supplemented by the public figure of the father" (p. 497).

2.3.1 The Situated Woman

Social roles available to women appear to be primarily located in the domestic domain and Dodd (1990) argues that our mothers provide us with "the most enduring example of a woman's place in the world, an image which may or may not be reinforced by other images in the world at large" (p. 17). To the extent that the child's context is acknowledged as important, this context is often limited to the "mother-child dyad" (Burman, 1994, p.43). Burman shows how developmental psychology has in its knowledge making failed to take into account the wider social and material environment within which the child and mother are situated. In these terms, the mother's identity, indeed her *womanness* is erased by the centrality of concerns with children and their development (de Kanter, 1993).

One way in which we may explore how female identity and subjectivity are connected is through an understanding of the contextual positions of both daughter and mother as *women*. The acknowledgment of the contextual position of both women is significant, as de Kanter (1993) suggests that both mother and daughter need to engage with each other as "situated women" (p.26). The task for the daughter then is to be able to "perceive their mothers as women in all their different roles, positions, contexts. In short daughters become 'situated' women and mothers are 'situated' women" (Schreurs, 1993, p. 5). To

acknowledge the positions of both mother and daughter as women is to acknowledge the ways in which mother and daughter are never joined as one and that as women they are more than their roles 'mother' or 'daughter' alone. In so doing, de Kanter (1993) argues for a 'relational triangular' to replace the traditional 'relational dual':

"As feminist scholars, it is our task... to contextualise theory of the mother-child relationship by stressing the importance of the woman position as a third term in the mother-child relationship... Her position as a woman situates the mother in the symbolic. If we acknowledge that the mother is never really fused with her child, her womanness can split the dyadic into a triangular relationship" (p. 28)

de Kanter argues that notions of what it means to be a woman need to be incorporated in the relational interactions between mother and child. To do this, is to acknowledge all the layered ways that women experience their identities. This argument asserts that the symbolic meanings attached to being a mother must include other facets of female identity. This will enable a destabilising of any fixed versions of what constitutes 'good mother' or 'bad mother' as being a mother is layered for all the complexities of what it means to be a woman.

In the task of becoming an adult, the young daughter is faced with having to separate from her mother, however de Kanter (1993) argues that this is context specific i.e. this is not a universal task, independent of its social context. The potential shifts of western post-industrial societies have produced changes in women's roles. Educational changes are making more social roles available for women than ever before. Women are able to compete in job markets not previously accessed and this has meant that particular professional sectors, typically male dominated, are accessible although the reality is that men still heavily dominate these positions (Aapola et al., 2005). Combined effects of shifts towards globalisation and feminism have 'opened' up previously inaccessible avenues for social roles and work. This 'opening' of roles to women in the workplace has implications for women's identity as well as the relationships that they have with family

at home. Paradoxically, intergenerational female relationships may be sustained in single households for longer because of extended financial dependency as young adult women continue with post-secondary education as they may therefore remain in the home longer than their mothers or grandmothers may have.

It is important to acknowledge here that this is not an attempt to present an amalgam of women's social roles as universal. Aapola et al. (2005) argue that "the path towards a satisfying job winds its way through various educational requirements... In particular, post-compulsory qualification, have become critical if young people are to compete for work in the new economy" (p. 65). The social conditions that shape and interpenetrate women's worlds vary in significant ways and we must be careful when theorising generational shifts in education for young women, to acknowledge that the category 'woman' does not stand alone, as one's femaleness is always overlaid with aspects of race and class (Kiguwa, 2004). With this point of view in mind, South African women generally have more opportunities than previously to negotiate power in the labour market, but as Aapola et al. (2005) suggest, women need particular educational credentials to be able to do so. While particular shifts in social roles appear to have made more roles available to *some* girls, not *all* girls are able to access these newer (empowering) social roles. 'Becoming a girl or woman' has varied meanings across cultural and economic strata and South Africa still has oppressive and unequal gender (and sexual) practices (Kiguwa, 2004; Shefer, 2004) with women still placed in subservience to men. In this context, it is important to "produce, re-produce and share (already existing) alternative voices and discourses that reveal resistance and challenge to the still hegemonic discourses on what it means to be gendered, sexed and sexual" (Shefer, 2004, p. 208). Women the world over and in a South African context in particular, are not all able to negotiate social roles evenly, with middle class (often white) women most likely being able to do so: "High achievement, both academically and

professionally, is connected not only to class but racial and cultural values and resources” (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 69).

However, it is vital to acknowledge these shifts for what they mean for the categories ‘mother’ and ‘daughter’. What remains significant in this study is to interrogate how an interaction between mothers and daughters can work to both challenge and reproduce dominant gender discourses. For example, as long as daughters’ demands are directed predominantly towards mothers, and fathers’ influence in the home remains obscured because of the prioritising of mothers’ influence on children, then particular interactions between mother and daughter are possible. Furthermore, the scope of influence in the home for fathers is reproduced as limited.

2.3.2 Fathers: Where Have All the ‘Good Men’ Gone?

Macleod (2001) argues that fathers’ roles in the home are too often reduced to a supplementary influence. The extent of a father’s influence in the home is determined by the ways in to which he is able to fulfil his role as a man and all too often, this is limited to the economic contributions that men can bring to the family (Mkhize, 2006). Class, race, and masculinity intersect with current understandings of what constitutes a ‘good father’ and Mkhize (2006) argues that “fatherhood is intertwined with the process by means of which men come to an understanding of who they are- their sense of identity and place- in society. Fatherhood does not occur in a vacuum; it is a socio-moral process informed by the dominant discourses of what it means to be a man in one’s society” (p. 186). What we know about gender, and how we conceptualise masculinity and femininity work to produce the understandings that we have of the roles available to men as fathers. Understandings of what passes for acceptable masculinity limit and constrain our understandings of what makes a ‘good father’.

Understandings of fathering in South African are embedded within a particular history that have intersections between employment, socio-economic status and a legal system that recognises fathers' influence only as far as dominant ideologies of fathering allow (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Structural imbalances remain between men and women's economic positions and this has given rise to the drive for fathers to be financially accountable for their offspring (Khunou, 2006). The financial obligations that fathers have towards both mother and child have only recently been balanced against the need for fathers to interact with their children within our current legal system. Burman (1994) warns that the "rise of fathering" (p. 94) in media and developmental theory emerges in a mythical fashion, constructing an image of fathering that does more to perpetuate and normalise caring roles through simple role reversal than interrogate them.

A study conducted by Khunou (2006) reveals that most men (who do not live with their children due to divorce or separation, or children being born outside of a formal relationship) suggest that for them being a father goes beyond having to pay maintenance. This finding is important for what it reveals about the experience of being a father. Khunou argues that "no study...should sidestep the issue that in financial and economic terms, men in South Africa are still generally in more powerful positions than women...however...economic power has not translated into relational power... Maintenance has not smoothed the path to easier relationships with their children and they have often found themselves blocked from developing closer relationships" (p. 275). This is a particularly powerful understanding for it does not deny the structural imbalances that work to keep women from being able to make empowered decisions for themselves and their children financially. However, it does express the dilemma we face in South Africa with regard to the role that fathers have in children's lives. The reality for many families in South Africa is that fathering does not always happen within the typical 'nuclear family' (Morrell, 2006). Rather divorce and children born outside of any formal relationship are realities and as such, gender theory concerned with relations both in the

home and outside of it must begin to include ideas about parenting that go beyond normative prescriptions for either mother or father (Khunou, 2006). Part of doing this is about addressing the seeming divide between public and private that functions to keep mothers' work hidden and undervalued in the home, and fathers' influence limited and constrained.

Dominant understandings of fathers' and mothers' roles appear to reinforce an already existing divide between public and private as Prinsloo (2006) argues that a

“binary distinction between the public and private spheres...whereby the private becomes associated and conflated with the domestic, the natural, the family, personal life and intimacy caring, reproduction and unwaged labour. The public becomes the (privileged) domain of the market place, production, waged labour, rationality, citizenship, critical public discourse and the state” (p. 134).

Typically fathers are one part of the 'developmental story' that often is not told, or is told in bit parts, representing fathering in discourses that centre on (but are not limited to) 'absence' or reduced to 'provider' (Morrell, 2006).

However the tensions between these domains and the ways in which they are gendered, are complex and shifting. Morrell (2006) argues that a predominant discourse is the current concern “absent fathers” (p. 18). Absence in these terms refers to either a physical absence or an emotional absence in the private or domestic sphere of the family. Furthermore these absence discourses are embedded in a particular South African system whereby African men were required to work on a migrant working system that left many families without a traditional father in the home (Morrell, 2006). For traditional fathers from all sectors of South African society dominant ideologies of masculinity perpetuate ideologies that assert “unequal...relationships with women, children and people of colour or other religions and beliefs...This form of masculinity is often considered to be dominant...Even though other expressions of masculinity exist” (p. 19).

The seemingly prevalent divide between male and female, public and private, shapes and structures the relationships that take shape in the home. As long as a father meets his economic commitments and protects the family, then he is considered a 'good father'. This kind of understanding is problematic not only for the hegemony that it reproduces but also for the ways in which it leaves little (if any) space at all to renegotiate both masculinity and femininity practices so that the public/ private divide may be destabilised. Whether arguing for the positioning of mothers or fathers as more or less important in children's lives, what remains consistent is the call for an emphasis on the perspective of what is in the best interests of children (Khunou, 2006).

Mothers and fathers are subject to particular forms of regulation. For men being a 'good father' is about being a good provider. To be a good provider is to ensure that fathers remain in the public, engaged in paid labour and by effect spend much less time at home (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). To destabilise fixed notions of being a good father is to attempt to shift the boundary between public and private as the time men spend working is counter-posed with the time they spend at home (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). On the other hand, assumptions about what makes a good mother are connected to what developmental theory asserts to be good mothering (heavily influenced by Bowlby and Winnicott). This crucially entails the inverse of the fathering role, premised on extensive time spent in the home to minimise separation from children. Destabilising fixed notions of being a 'good mother' would necessarily entail interrogating developmental theory at a fundamental level.

2.4 Attachment and Regulation

Strongly influenced by evolutionary and animal studies, attachment theory took as its foundation the assumption that all people are born with a biological need to elicit caring and nurturing behaviour, and furthermore, that mothers are the best 'objects' to provide

this care (Burman, 1994). Attachment theory is the basis for what is now part of both popular and traditional psychological discourse, that ultimately secure or insecure attachment “becomes the essential basis for all future development” (Birns, 1999, p. 12). An overemphasis on biologically determined attachment has provided the basis upon which mother-child theories are constructed and these theories depict attachment as necessary, self-evident and provide “unequivocal outcomes of mothering and attachment behaviours and traits as fixed and stable properties of separate autonomous individuals” (Bliwise, 1999, p. 43).

Attachment theory has further been criticised for the way that feminine subjectivity is regulated through this theorising (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Through attachment theory, female identity is reduced to caregiver without which children would be destined to grow up maladjusted or problematic: “The evidence is now such that it leaves no room for doubt...that the prolonged deprivation of the young child of maternal care may have grave and far reaching effects on his [*sic*] character and on the whole of his [*sic*] future life” (Bowlby, 1952, in Rose, 1999, p.155). Mothers are not only central to children’s healthy development, but they are *naturally* the right persons for the task. Understandings of this nature place emphasis on childhood as *the* time and place for healthy identity development and on mothers as the guarantors of this ‘healthy development’. When healthy development is hindered in any way, mothers are necessarily held accountable for this ‘failure’ (Lawler, 2000). Children’s needs are not only privileged over and above mothers’ but good women are defined by their ability to be ‘good mothers’.

For Rose (1999) a critique that engages only with the way in which subjectivities are regulated through psychological knowledge is one-dimensional. Rose (1999) argues that psychological knowledges do not simply regulate individual subjectivities and asserts rather that, “technologies of subjectivity...exist in a kind of symbiotic relationship with

what one might term 'techniques of the self' the ways in which we are enabled, by means of the languages, criteria, and techniques offered to us, to act upon our bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health and fulfilment" (p.11). Regulation is possible not only because developmental theory exerts its 'all-knowing' power over subjects but also offers a framework of subjectivity within which women may position themselves and *each other*.

Lawler (2000) argues that "psy-knowledges are embedded across a range of sites... embedded in law and other state processes... They are not represented as *theories* but as truths about human nature" (p. 23). In an attempt to get a 'scientific' edge over psychoanalysis Bowlby's theory became legitimated in a way that allowed his theory to be interpreted as more than *just theory* (Burman, 1994). Attachment theory, at the time of its inception, provided the means through which 'healthy psyches' could be identified and monitored and, further provided the means through which women were able to identify their own mothering style and assess their own potential to be a 'good mother'. It is out of attachment theory that deeply political assumptions about the nature of mothering grew. As Rose (1989) argues, "separation in and of itself was no longer the point, for the child could experience separation even when in proximity to his or her mother. Separation began to merge with the quality of the experience of mothering itself. The stage was set for the entry of the 'sensitive mother'" (p. 168).

2.5 Sensitive Mothers and the (Re)production of Democracy

Embedded within representations of the 'sensitive mother' are enduring assumptions about what constitutes positive and healthy mothering. The ideal mother referred to as the 'sensitive mother' bears a remarkable resemblance to Winnicott's 'good-enough' mother (Lawler, 2000). According to Winnicott the 'good-enough' mother is always in touch with her children's needs and she responds with only a certain measure of sensitivity:

never too much to obstruct development, but just enough to allow them to practice being autonomous (Lawler, 2000). Mothers' 'sensitivity' ensures that children may become autonomous, and most importantly mothers must always *delight* in being the 'sensitive mother' as Lawler argues, "the infantile psyche cannot occur by means of the work of mothering alone- this work must be an expression of the mother's love" (p. 48). Further to the understanding that all children's needs must be met by the mother is the typically Winnicottian understanding of "mother-love" (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989, p. 16). 'Mother-love' is defined as the 'special joy' that women take in the (natural) act of being a mother. Lawler (2000) argues that this understanding of mother-love is so central to the role of mothering that failure to engage in real 'mother-love' practices will render faulty development for the child, "If the mother fails...the child will not develop its 'real self', but will, instead, construct for itself a compliant 'false self'. Children with 'false selves' are likely...to become either overly conformist or delinquent" (pp. 48-49). The child's emergent self depends almost entirely on how effective mothers are at 'mother-love', how well they can be the 'good enough mother' (Lawler, 2000).

While 'the mother'¹ constantly endeavours to be receptive to 'the child's' every wish and desire, her performance is monitored and measured against the prescription of what a 'good-enough' mother is. In the attempt to avoid becoming an overbearing mother who hinders her child's development, in an attempt to remain plenteous with her 'mother-love', 'the mother' must respond to the needs of her children in a bid to produce children who will grow to become good, moral and autonomous citizens (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Developmental theory presents versions of mothering that parade as truths, that are then inscribed onto mothers and mothering practices (Burman, 1994). Lawler (2000) argues that:

¹ I use the singular terms 'the mother' and 'the child' here to consciously reflect how developmental theories (such as those offered by Winnicott and Bowlby), have represented mothers uniformly as a universal abstract and present childhood as similarly lacking in diversity (Burman, 1994).

“Such truths, such meanings have far reaching consequences in the lives of mothers and daughters. Truths about the self and its development within childhood, its relations with others, and the various obligations which some selves consequently owe to other selves, are the means by which the categories ‘mother’ and ‘daughter’ are constituted” (p. 23).

As mothers work to facilitate (never dictate) their daughters’ development, they impart a mode of self-regulation for both mother and daughter. Mothers learn to self-regulate (as they cannot obstruct development in their children) and daughters are seen to be self-regulating when they are independent and autonomous having internalised their mothers’ regulation.

Through ‘good-enough’ mothering healthy, self-regulating and autonomous selves emerge. These selves are not overly conformist and neither are they delinquent, in this way these selves, through their self-regulation are able to ensure that a particular level of social order is maintained (Rose, 1999; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). As Lawler (2000) argues further, “the mother must manage her self, and teach the daughter to engage in practices of managing *her* self - to regulate *herself*. Indeed, it is impossible for mothers to be ‘mothers’ without regulating; not to do so is in itself marked as deviant” (p. 82). Autonomy is imparted through the practices of ‘good-enough’ mothering and mothers teach daughters, through their own mode of regulation, how to self-regulate and effectively manage their *selves*.

Autonomy defined as the ability to self-regulate is a hallmark of the ‘best interests of children’ discourse that underscores ideologies about sensitive mothering (Burman, 1994). Pedagogic practices embedded within the discourse of ‘good-enough’ mothering work precisely because of their covert nature as Lawler (2000) argues “the absence of *overt* control is read as not control at all, but as the mother’s sensitive facilitating of the child’s ‘true self’ ...this ‘true self’ is held to be intrinsically ‘autonomous’. Self-regulation

is normalised as the 'right' form of regulation, or indeed as autonomy- the lack of regulation. In this way, the self's relationship *to* itself- and the regulation inherent in this- becomes obscured" (p. 82, emphasis in original). Mothers who engage in this mode of parenting are indeed engaging in fundamental forms of democracy, and while there is mostly covert regulation inherent in this, it makes particular forms of relating between mother and daughter possible.

The family has become a primary site of focus for social institutions of culture, religion, politics, and psychology. The primacy of 'children's needs' indicates a shift in emphasis from parents' responsibility to children's rights. The family, and in particular, the mother/child dyad is theorised and represented in a range of social disciplines. Developmental theory, in particular, has given rise to understandings of the mother/child relationship with an emphasis on regulation. The mother/ child dyad proves a useful site for such regulation as it is carried out under the auspices of the 'best interests of children', but by effect, in the interests of good social order. Lawler (2000) argues: "Within these procedures, it is the mother/ child dyad which is the primary focus of the regulatory gaze of state agencies, and hence, the defining feature of 'good (enough) mothering is how adequately the mother meets the children's needs" (p. 136). Good mothering thus entails not only safeguarding of children's best development, but also the moral, democratic social order. Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) assert that the mother who must do this safeguarding has to employ her skills of democratic mothering.

Similar to Walkerdine & Lucey (1989), de Waal (1993) asserts that, "many parents prefer discussion and negotiation... [A] shift from command to negotiation" (p.36). Negotiation can here be read as mothers' attempts to operate more in a 'democratic' mode of parenting, especially as they attempt to provide 'healthy development' spaces for their children. In the mother-daughter relationship in particular, de Waal (1993) explains the particular democratic stance some mothers make take:

“[Mothers] present themselves increasingly as ‘friend’ of their daughters- as an *equal*, who is never angry, only disappointed... Using almost imperceptible force, modern mothers try to raise their daughters to do ‘spontaneously’ what the mother wants. It is no easy task for daughters to discern their mother’s pedagogic moral, veiled as it is in *reasonable arguments, apparent empathy and shared enjoyment*” (p. 42, emphasis added).

This particular democratic mode is a means to persuade daughters to self-regulate and internalise the norms that previously were enforced in a top-down manner in preceding generations of mothers and daughters. In this study there appears to be a convergence between the discourses of ‘good mothering’ and ‘friendship’.

2.6 ‘Good Girls’: The Institute Of Motherhood and Friendship

Female friendships are stereotypically understood as based primarily on intimate interactions characterised by talk and sharing emotions (Walker, 1994). Women’s friendships are understood in this way primarily because culturally specific ideologies constitute femininity as based on connection and relational interaction. By contrast, male friendships are understood as based on shared activities (as opposed to talk) because healthy male development implies rigid ego boundaries and disconnection (Rubin, 1985). Girls are raised to be women, an identity seemingly pre-existing into which girls must grow and fit. Female identity is seen as an identity in as much as it is the complement of masculine identity.

Similarly, Reid & Fine (1992) assert that women’s friendships differ qualitatively from men’s friendships in that women’s relationships are credited with “more expressive and intimate disclosures than... men and spend time talking with same gender friends than doing activities with them; the preferred mode of interaction for males” (p. 133). The functioning of female friendship differs markedly from male friendships in that women’s

friendships centre on emotional support and intimate conversation. Thus, intimacy between female friends necessarily involved disclosure. Wright (1982) argues that male friendships centre on task orientation such as sport, as well as exhibiting high levels of instrumentality. Wright describes this as a “side by side mode of companionship that differs from the socio-emotional characteristics of female friendships” (p. 8). Moreover, girls according to Guezaine, Derby & Liesens (2000) are taught from a young age to make and maintain intimate relationships whilst boys “have to reach autonomous functioning earlier” (p. 88). The literature thus supports a highly gendered account of the ways in which both girls and boys engage in friendships.

The social roles available to both men and women indicate that there is a gendered divide along which male and females are able to identify and enact particular subject positions. In this study, the merging of a particular version of sensitive mothering with the institution of friendship reveals the ideologies that sustain gendered interactions for women. Aapola et al. (2005) assert that girls’ friendships are considered primary sites for the construction of femininity: “Friendships for girls are important sites for identity-creation as well as for trying out various forms of femininity” (p. 111). From this point of view, it is necessary to explore how conceptualising the mother-daughter relationship as friendship performs particular work for each woman.

These prevalent ideologies surrounding friendship work to structure and arrange relationships along private/ public divides but another dimension to this genderedness requires exploration. In the conceptualisation of mother and daughter as ‘best friends’, the levels of disclosure may demarcate the boundaries within the relationship. Female friendships are typically thought to be characterised by a higher degree of intimacy than male friendships, with intimacy being defined by self-disclosure (Berndt, 1999). Furthermore, a possible conflict in mother-daughter relationships appears to be circumscribed by disclosure or lack thereof possibly in an attempt to protect or shelter

each other from possible 'hurtful' feelings. Surrey (1993) points out that: "Mothers may try to protect daughters from their pain, or the intensity of their own needs...at the same time, even very young girls are 'tuned in' and feel their mother's feelings" (p. 116). What is (and is not) said, appears to be significant for the interactions that mother and daughter share. Furthermore, disclosure works in general to attain and maintain particular levels of intimacy in female friendships (Berndt, 1999). For this research, it is pivotal to explore how each woman uses disclosure to demarcate boundaries between herself and her mother/ daughter even while referring to this relationship as friendship. The boundaries between mother and daughter are possibly shaped by what is disclosed and conversely by what is not disclosed.

That friendships are deeply gendered is a particularly well documented observation (Aapola et al., 2005; Rubin, 1985; Walker, 1994;) and it is suggested that this is so to the extent that "girls and boys do different kind of 'friendship work'..." (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 113). In this study, it is suggested that this 'work' is an indication of how women are required to be particular kinds of mothers and daughters to enact particular forms of female subjectivity. Within this 'friendship work' particular technologies of selfhood operate through which individuals manage their-selves and each other's selves. Aapola et al. (2005) argue that girls' friendships are based on rules of "mutual intimacy and reciprocal commitment" (p. 117). Girls are, within the boundaries of 'best friends', expected to be 'good girls' as they ought to display the characteristics typically associated with a good female friend. Girls are therefore expected to display characteristics traditionally associated with being a 'nice girl' and this necessarily means "controlling one's emotions and first and foremost one's aggressive feelings, being sweet and friendly succeeding at school and obeying one's parents" (*Ibid.*, p. 118). From this point of view, acceptable girls (indeed *nice* girls) are those girls who display and enact a particular version of femininity. In most senses, this femininity makes connection with others possible as girls who obey their parents, and are 'sweet and friendly' remain

within the margins of acceptable and can be considered 'good girls' (Aapola et al., 2005). Being able to assert that the relationship with one's mother bears resemblance to friendship reveals something about how each woman is located within this relationship. Within any female friendship are particular rules of engagement that centre on discourses of 'good girl', 'nice girl,' and 'normal'. The act of declaring one's mother as best friend indicates that this relationship is connected to modes of democracy that uphold equity, reason and compliance (Rose, 1999).

To this end, Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) suggest that one of the features of the 'sensitive mother' is her commitment to a non-authoritarian position as "essentially there should be no regulation; regulation should go underground: no power battles, no insensitive sanctions as these would interfere with the child's illusion that she is the source of her wishes, that she has 'free will'" (pp. 23-24). In this understanding, the democratic home is characterised by a particular illusion of autonomy (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). This illusion makes it possible for the mother to make her authority known through less perceptible means that is, her discipline is covert and appears as the mother regulating her own responses to her child. In return, daughters learn to internalise their mother's regulation and they learn to self-regulate (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

The sensitive mother is a friend precisely because of her devotion to reasoning with her daughter. Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) argue that discipline takes the shape of democratic reasoning:

"the adult has rights to discipline children, yet disciplining is considered potentially harmful, because feelings of powerlessness and humiliation will result...The discourse of rights suggests a liberal analysis but we are taken powerfully into libertarianism, where what is at stake is the production of a mode of disciplining free from overt authoritarianism" (p. 25).

Mother and daughter are able, under the guise of friendship, to engage in interactions that are characterised by all the qualities of democracy: reason, autonomy, and equality. It would appear that it is primarily through talk and reason that these values of democracy are imparted and internalised between mother and daughter.

The way in which the categories 'mother' and 'daughter' are reproduced through conceptualising the relationship as *friendship* implies that particular practices constitute the relationship as such. Lawler (2000) asserts that:

“... inevitably, the 'sensitive, 'good-enough' mother finds her 'other' in the bad, insensitive mother who fails to allow the real self to flourish. It is this bad mother...which marks out the boundaries of the 'normal'. This is the basis on which mothers are subjected to the gaze of the psy professionals: through which they are both regulated and (ideally) regulate themselves” (pp. 74-75).

In attempts to be a 'good enough mother' or a 'sensitive mother', women engage in regulating their behaviours directed towards their children, not only to meet the needs of healthy development, but also that they too may remain within the margins of 'good mothering'.

Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) suggest that 'sensitive mothers' must relinquish much of their own authority to reason out conflicts with children. This reasoning works on many levels to produce seemingly harmonious, perhaps friend-like interactions between mother and child: “The democratic fantasy holds that power gained through reason rather than coercion is good, reasonable power” (p. 108). Further to this conceptualisation, Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) argue that pedagogy remains central for mothers as they must teach their daughters that demands are only ever met when they are reasonable: “The system of regulation par excellence therefore is Reason: reasonable demands can be met; everything is possible, *within reason*. It forms the bedrock of modern pedagogic practices, designed to produce reasonable citizens; reasoning is the key to morality and

that is the key to a stable democracy” (pp. 110-111, emphasis added). This inclusion of reason within feminine subjectivity is overlaid with assumptions about a particular (white) masculine paradigm generally (Venn, 1998). It would be spurious to suggest here that a society based on reason is embedded in masculine overtures and dismiss it on this basis alone. What is important however is to explore how it is that feminine subjectivity has traditionally and historically been left out of the project of rationality and reason as “blacks and women were excluded on the claim that they were naturally less endowed with reason than (white) men” (Venn, 1998, p. 133). The turn to reason generally and historically has provided the counter-position to lack of control, and it has been argued that where there is reason there is a society organised around rationality and order through *self-control* (Venn, 1998).

The project of reasonable and ordered society is made possible through democracy but this implies that subjectivity can no longer be monitored explicitly and directly (Rose, 1999). Rather, Rose (1999) argues that new “technologies of autonomy” make regulating (and self-regulating) of subjectivity possible (p. 244). The literature thus appears to present two major channels through which women are able to monitor their own and others’ subjectivities. First, Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) suggest a rubric of reason that leads to the realisation of the democratic values of freedom, autonomy, and so forth. Second, Rose (1999) suggests that ‘technologies of autonomy’ have provided the means through which “The truthful rendering into speech of who one is, to one’s parents, one’s teacher, one’s doctor, one’s lover, and oneself, is installed at the heart of contemporary procedures of individualization” (p. 244). In the quest to be autonomous beings, Rose would argue that the act of representing oneself through talk is an indication of attempts to make sense of oneself to others and to oneself.

2.7 A Society of Subjects and the Subject of Democracy

Regulation within the family does not take the form of *subjecting* a population of 'subjects' to overt social control, rather the *self-monitoring* that we have been encouraged to (and often do) engage in ensures that democratic order remains stable. Rose (1999) asserts that:

“The modern private family remains intensively governed... But government here acts not through mechanisms of social control and subordination of the will, but through the promotion of subjectivities... The new relational technologies of the family are installed within us... urging a constant scrutiny of our inherently difficult interactions with our children and each other” (p. 213).

Dominant ideological systems (such as democracy) must, in order to be maintained, monitor, and control the conditions of what appear to be deeply private institutions such as the family.

The argument asserted by Rose (1999) works well to support what Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) argue with regard to the workings of democracy in the home. Walkerdine & Lucey argue that democracy has now been activated in the “kitchen of the sensitive mother” (p. 101). Mothers must be ‘sensitive’ and through such sensitivity reduce potential areas for conflict. Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) assert that this position has both oppressive and exploitative effects, as women must toil to produce children who are good citizens:

“...it is difficult to understand an apparent freedom- to talk, to discover to play- as regulation. But that is what we are claiming it is, because it is through the regulation of women that they too have become regulators, those who will ensure ‘normal development’, which is the central part of the warding off, the guarding against, anti-social activity (delinquency, crime and so forth)” (*Ibid.*, p. 102).

However it must be acknowledged that women are not *only* exploited or oppressed

through this positioning. Subjectivities located within the discourse of democracy (and globalisation) are able to negotiate particular freedoms. Theorising female subjectivity within a framework that acknowledges a particular positioning as liberating as well as exploitative engages with the thorough workings of power.

Rose (1999) asserts that a prevailing ideology concerning the family and its privacy works well to monitor and control through delineating where the divide sits between public and private as, “on one hand, the state representing dominant male interests, chooses the nature and objectives of public regulation; on the other, a domain is constituted outside legal regulation and designated ‘private’ where welfare agencies enforce the ideology of motherhood” (pp. 127-128). A divide between what constitutes ‘public’ and ‘private’ works well to ensure that social systems such as the legal system and social structures (such as religion, culture, ‘traditions’) determine what it is they each will govern and how much of the private is public. The family is in this way rendered public property in so much as these social structures already mentioned function to monitor the family. The idealisation of women as mothers in the home falls into the ‘private’ and here overt institutionalised social structures will not intervene. However, this lack of overt intervention paradoxically works to thoroughly maintain gendered inequalities precisely through naturalising this ‘private’ space as women’s domain.

Embedded within the debate about where the boundaries for public and private exist are assumptions that are rooted in child-centred pedagogy (Burman, 1994). The individual, autonomous self so prized by typical ‘western’ society is constituted within contexts that place children’s development at the centre of all social policy and structure and ultimately finds practice in the home (Lawler, 2000). The intersection between social structures and autonomy are so important for how this intersection works to ensure democracy as a product of healthy development, “while democracy is celebrated as central to child as well as societal development, this shifts to become less a feature of

social structures and more an evaluation of family life” (Burman, 1994, p. 169). Further, Burman (1994) argues that revisiting child development from a constructed point of view (as opposed to the prevalent biological maturation viewpoint) is important:

“The failure to see child development as socially constructed rather than biologically unfolding leads to an ignorance of the ways the models inscribe particular moral values. Far from being ‘whole’ with pedagogy ‘centred’ around her or him, the child of the child-centred approaches is a carefully orchestrated social production with ‘needs’ and (gender, class, cultural, sexual) qualities designated to mesh with normative prescriptions of social arrangements” (pp. 173-174).

Emphasis is given in developmental theory to childhood in such a way that it obscures the ways in which childhood is a social creation informed by the intersections of gender, class, sexuality, and culture.

For Burman (1994), one important cultural marker for child-centred pedagogy rests with a need (of ‘western’ society) for subjectivities that were ‘not authoritarian’ to develop in a response to the Second World War, and autonomy, democracy and child-centred pedagogy became tangled up in each other. Burman (1994) argues that child-centred education proposed a number of key tenets all of which suggest autonomy as central to a successful outcome. Further, child-centred approaches to learning placed the child’s own social, cognitive, and emotional needs at the middle of any engagement with learning. Added to this is an emphasis on the child’s ‘choice’ to learn that places, overall, children’s needs above any adult interacting with the child (Burman, 1994). Moreover, this approach falls remarkably in line with “a model of learning that accords a model of liberal society- as composed of rational, freely choosing, isolated, equal individuals” (Burman, 1994, p. 167). This analysis is significant for the links it makes between autonomy and its function in a “liberal, ‘free’, society” (*Ibid.*, p. 167.). Characteristics such as freedom and egalitarianism became highly desirable traits of the typical (western)

young adult *and* the sensitive mother (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). The effects of democracy and equality can be found circulating within the home between parents and children as the home is where most responsibility for shaping of autonomous selves is located.

Russell et al. (1998) argue that interactions between parent and child have previously been studied in ways that emphasise either 'child centred' or 'parent centred' approaches to parenting. Power dynamics between parent and child have typically been viewed as transacted in a vertical manner i.e. that power flows from parent to child or that power is resisted (or challenged) by the child. Conceptualising the mother-daughter relationship as 'friendship' works to even out patterns of interaction and is in many ways connected to child-centred pedagogy. Power within children-parent interactions is predominantly skewed in any instance with the balance of power resting in adult's hands. Parents are traditionally understood to wield power over children, and children as obedient to this power (Russell et al., 1998). This vertical dynamic of power operating in the home is given rise to through the ways in which children are notably dependent on their parents, in particular economical and physical dependence (Aapola et al., 2005). The family is indeed a social institution with a plethora of interested parties working on it and through it to produce particular selves, selves that will go on to protect the moral fabric of 'the social' (Lawler, 2000; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Regulation and ultimately self-regulation makes it possible for families to appear as though they govern themselves, indeed this is the backbone of democracy (Rose, 1999).

For women, the effect of this regulation is so embedded within the pressure to be a sensitive mother that the mother (like daughter) assumes she is a free autonomous being and so an illusion is set up (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). This illusion fosters a sense of autonomy in the child, as she (unsuspectingly) believes her actions to be self-willed and indeed unregulated. The regulative role that mothers have over their children thus

becomes less about a matter of authority and discipline and more about an egalitarian sensitivity that upholds and perpetuates the assumed values of democracy. Furthermore, this illusion of egalitarian parenting works in multiple ways to serve the interests of children and not always mothers. This illusion of democracy works well to perpetuate old ideas about pathological and normal mothers (bad mothers and sensitive mothers), choices, and freedoms as Burman (1994) argues:

“The liberalism that child-centeredness was supposed to express celebrates freedom and choice, but existing social inequalities structure differential access to choice. Increasingly, parents and children are expected to shoulder more responsibilities in the name of greater participation and democracy, but are actually afforded fewer means to fulfil these” (pp. 175-176).

Shifts in social structures may make it possible for women to possibly negotiate more power, however this does not always translate equally across all class, race, and gendered boundaries. Further, liberation possibly offered by child-centred discourses offer children, and not always adults, the benefits of autonomy and choice.

2.8 Conclusion

This study is an interrogation of how women talk about the mother-daughter relationship emerging. An interrogation of this kind must necessarily engage with questions that address identity, gender and questions about institutionalised social practices that regulate and monitor female subjectivity. While this is an interrogation of the ways in which female identity is understood by mothers and daughters themselves, understanding how female identity is situated within both a social and historical context can provide an analysis that explores the ways that women themselves experience their subjectivities as both exploited and liberated within discourses of ‘mothering’ and ‘daughtering’.

3. METHODOLOGY

“When you talk with me about my research, do not ask me what I found; I found nothing. Ask me what I invented, what I made up from and out of my data. But know that in asking you to ask me this, I am not confessing to telling any lies about the people or events in my stories/ studies. I have told the truth. The proof is in the things I have made- how they look to our mind’s eye, whether they satisfy your sense of style and craftsmanship, whether you believe them, and whether they appeal to your heart”.

(Sandelowski, 1994, p. 121).

3.1 Methodological Framework

Broadly, the research paradigm in this project was an interpretive approach that takes as its primary point of departure the value of individual subjective experience (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Researchers working in this paradigm work in interaction with people to gather rich accounts of the complexities of people’s lives. Interpretive approaches are defined by the imperative for researchers to “stay close to the data” (p. 139) and use interpretive understandings to do more than simply re-present ‘real life’ versions of participants’ stories. Rather, interpretive researchers work to “place real-life events and phenomena into some kind of perspective” (*Ibid.*, p. 139). Generally, interpretive approaches to research are defined by the role the researcher has not only in collection of data, but in analysis as well as “good interpretive research should neither impose theoretical understandings on phenomena nor simply reproduce the phenomena uncritically” (Kelly, 1999, p. 405).

3.1.1 Interpretive Inquiry/ Hermeneutics

The social sciences have generally shifted from the (natural science) definition of meaning as ‘out there’ in the world and apprehendable. This has meant a necessary shift for methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Henning, 2004; Schwandt, 1998). Entailing

multiple movements away from empirical work as a preferred 'gateway' to reality as it exists out there, to a current post-modern project that upholds a mode of reference that is reflexive rather than 'realist' (Sey, 1999). One consequence of these shifts in a context of modernity has been the prioritising of interpretation. In an interpretive framework, interpretation is the "fundamental grounds of our being in the world" (Schwandt, 1998, p. 229), not just a particular methodological approach.

For the interpretive researcher, interpretation is not simply another research tool, rather it is "the very condition of human inquiry itself" (Schwandt, 1998, p., 224). Interpretive researchers "look for the *way* in which people make meaning in their lives, not just *that* they make meaning, and *what* meaning they make. Thus the interpretive researcher looks for the frames that shape meaning" (Henning, 2004, p. 20). In this way, interpretation is possible and *imperative* in at least two ways as people can interpret their own worlds, and the researcher in turn can interpret the meanings that people have of their lived experiences.

Schwandt (1998) argues that social science research attempts to understand "the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it... to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it" (pp 221-222). This is in stark contrast to the positivist paradigm's understanding of reality. Positivists assume that reality is "driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 204). Reality exists 'out there' functioning according to the natural laws of the universe and therefore all research must describe reality as observed and measured directly, in a value-free manner (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Henning, 2004). It is in this way that the researcher and her 'object' of study are separated and independent of each other.

By contrast, interpretive approaches to research construe the relationship between the researcher and her 'object' of study quite differently as "researchers working in this

tradition assume that people's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), that we can understand others' experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology), and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology)" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 123). From this perspective, interpretive research asserts that all people are social actors making meaning through social interaction. This particular understanding of being in the world (ontology) necessarily defines and constrains the ways (epistemology) in which, we as researchers can attempt to know something about people's social reality and therefore *how* we should go about generating knowledge of this reality (methodology).

3.1.2 Feminist Framework: Who Can Interpret?

Qualitative or interpretive research has a particular resonance with feminist agendas (Denzin, 2001; Edwards & Ribbens 1998; Kvale, 1996). Both qualitative research and feminist theorists are preoccupied with dislodging any fixed versions of reality and opt rather to focus on human interaction as a possible source for understanding social reality (Olesen, 1998). Moreover, feminist research places the researcher's history, assumptions, and values at the centre of the research process. The researcher and her 'subject' are not separated as they are connected in a co-construction of meaning within the research process. For feminist researchers, subjectivity becomes a possible research tool rather than a source of bias as asserted by positivists (Olesen, 1998). The researcher's own situated and historical self is central to the process of data collection and interpretation

Feminist research begins with women, as researchers located collaboratively with participants within the process of meaning making in research (Olesen, 1998). In the spirit of feminist research, the researcher begins with a focus on women from the understanding that "gender is a basic organising principle that profoundly shapes the concrete conditions of our lives" (Kvale, 1996, p. 73). Feminist research seeks to enable women to tell stories of their everyday lives, in their own terms and words enabling

women to talk about their lived experiences and to represent their worlds in interaction with the researcher. The researcher's role is thus central to the way that the women's voices are "re/presented" (Alldred, 1998, p.150). Women's stories and biographies speak to the social conditions and larger public spaces that create the conditions for their experiences. In this way, women's voices are able to erase the division between public and private (Denzin, 2001). It is this division between public and private that potentially obscures the way in which female identity is locked into abstracted social roles of 'mother' or 'daughter' and into the private realm of the family. Edwards & Ribbens (1998) argue that distinctions between public and private ways of being are particularly gendered due to the ways in which women's social roles are fixed, especially as 'mother' within a domestic (private) positioning. The task for the feminist researcher is therefore to explore what are "otherwise largely hidden and subordinated ways of being" (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998, p. 10). Women as researchers and women as participants take part not only in a process of co-creation of meaning, but also as instruments through which these private ways of being are represented and interpreted. The aim of the researcher is thus to navigate sensitively through women's stories, interpreting and representing these private (and subordinated) ways of being, and furthermore to connect this with a larger public domain (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998).

Allred (1998) asserts that researchers must distinguish between re-presentation and re/presentation. In the first case (re-presentation), it can be argued that there is some attempt to capture and portray something of participant's stories in a way that respects the content of what is revealed by participants and how that should be represented. This particular claim to representation asserts a need to take "greater caution over our representational claims and avoid obscuring the *perspectival nature of knowledge*" (Allred, 1998, p. 162. emphasis added). The researcher must make explicit in her findings and analysis the ways that knowledge and re/presentations are "actively produced by me and embodies my perspective" (Allred, 1998, p. 149). This distinction

is an important one as it highlights the tension between a need to stay close to participant's voices, and the need to remain reflexive and make visible our *own* location within the texts we write.

Clough (1994 as cited in Denzin, 2001) argues that feminist research "is thus constructed, building...on women's identities in the private sphere...working outwards to women's identities in the public sphere...women's experiences should be the starting point for a more accurate representation of reality" (p. 45). The argument here is that in an attempt to produce knowledge that is both local and gendered, the researcher should take seriously the intersections between representation and interpretation. It is imperative that researchers pay attention to both what research is done (content) and how this gets represented (form). To do this, feminist researchers must place connection between researcher and 'subject' at the centre of the research process. The understanding that research is an interpretive act is located within an understanding that research be done in *collaboration* with research participants. Moreover, the research process as a constructivist act "involves a conversational approach to social research" (Kvale, 1996, p. 5). Researchers that seek to inquire about peoples' social reality should do one simple thing: talk with them! (Kvale, 1996).

3.1.3 Interviewing: A Turn To Talk!

The interview provides a context for interaction and "thus the interview becomes both the tool and the object, the art of sociological sociability" (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p 47). Previous methodologies grounded in the scientific tradition explicitly excluded ostensibly culturally feminine traits such as emotionality, sensitivity, empathy, and so forth from the interview process, which was highly standardised and structured (Fontana & Frey, 1998). However, the ways in which interviews are framed and constrained are contested and shifting. Both interpretivist and feminist researchers reject interviews grounded in a particularly masculine paradigm for the value placed on objectivity and value placed on

disconnection. In the traditional scientific tradition, interviews are carried out in hierarchical ways, with the researcher placed in a position of authority over the participant (Olesen, 1998). The researcher is considered 'the expert' as they have 'the knowledge'² and interviews are conducted purely for information's sake. Oakley (1990) argues that interviews carried out in this manner are depersonalised, as the researcher gives nothing away about himself or herself. Further, interviews carried out in this manner reinforce power held by the researcher over the participant. Oakley (1990) proposes that in order to destabilise entrenched power relations within research, feminist researchers must be prepared to engage with participants meaningfully. Connection is possible through disclosure and responding to participant's questions about you as researcher as well as the research process.

Kvale (1996) makes use of two divergent metaphors to illustrate the difference between interviews conducted within a typically scientific (masculine) paradigm, and interviews that represent a shift away from masculine paradigms. This is not to imply that positivist and qualitative research interviews are binary oppositions of each other, but rather that the differences represent a shift methodologically towards an understanding of research relationships based on intimacy and trust (Fontana & Frey, 1998).

In the first metaphor, Kvale (1996) describes an "interviewer as miner" (p. 3) who conceptualises knowledge as something to be mined, excavated in the same way miners unearth precious metals. In this understanding, knowledge (and lived experience) is something waiting to be uncovered and extracted in some 'pure' way: "By analysis, the objective facts and the essential meanings are drawn out by various techniques and moulded into their definitive form. Finally the end product... is determined by correlating it with an objective, external real world or to a realm of subjective, inner, authentic

² I refer consciously here to the singular terms 'the expert' and 'the knowledge' to reflect traditionally entrenched beliefs about the role of researcher and knowledge traditionally valued in social science.

experiences” (*Ibid.*, p. 4). The ‘interviewer as miner’ metaphor informs positivist forms of methodology.

Kvale’s (1996) second metaphor of the “interviewer as traveller” (p. 4) describes the way in which the researcher explores the participants’ worlds and through conversation attempts to understand and interpret something about their worlds from the stories that they tell:

“The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as ‘wandering together with’...What the travelling reporter hears and sees is described qualitatively and is reconstructed as stories...The potentialities of meanings in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through the traveller’s interpretations” (*Ibid.*, p. 4).

This particular understanding is distinct from the ‘researcher as miner’ metaphor as the researcher understands that the content of the researched, as well as the form this takes, informs the relationship between researcher and participant/s.

The metaphors that Kvale (1996) uses are valuable in that they describe the way in which the interviewer can never know any absolute or final overriding version of people’s lived experiences. However, as Denzin (2001) argues such ‘final’ knowledge is also not possible for participants themselves. One’s own interpretation and forms of representation are always located firmly within the process of knowledge making as Denzin (2001) argues: “An all knowing subject is a fiction... The researcher, like ‘subject’ is always in the hermeneutic circle, always seeing situations and structures in terms of prior understandings and prior interpretations” (p. 97). The researcher is dynamically connected to the research process with each participant. However, to avoid collapsing into a state of solipsistic relativism, the researcher must work constantly to

reconnect these stories with broader historical and social structures that help to both create and sustain the conditions of these participants' lives.

Interviewing therefore does not represent yet another research method added to a battery of methods in the social sciences (Kvale, 1996; Schwandt, 1998). Rather, interviewing presents on its own, an alternative "conception of social knowledge, of meaning, reality, and truth in social science research" (p. 11). It is Kvale's (1996) use of the word "Inter Views" (p. 2) that highlights this move away from a positivist understanding of knowledge formation towards a post-modern understanding. By referring to the process as "Inter Views", Kvale highlights how both participant and interviewer are situated within the process of knowledge construction. A post-modern understanding therefore asserts that knowledge is shared and knowledge about people's worlds does not exist in separate discrete (static) chunks, awaiting discovery.

Reality is not directly observable, rather reality can only be accessed through the representations people have of it. Reality is thus symbolic, made up of, and mediated through, the representations that people have of it (Denzin, 2001). A focus on talk necessarily places an emphasis on language and from this, we arrive at the questions of ontology (being) and epistemology (knowing) again. This research thus holds as an ontological assumption that all human beings are social actors and that we make meaning in the context of social interaction. Having said that, the ways in which we, as researchers, can understand how meaning is made is through interpretation within the process of analysing the data. There are therefore two different layers of interpretation: 1) of an ongoing construction between the researcher and participants and 2) the analysis is a particular interpretation by the researcher.

3.1.4 Interpretive Interactionism

Interpretive interactionism, as a methodology, is one particular interpretive approach, although not the only one. This approach seeks to explore the multiple ways in which the biographies of people can be interpreted and aims to connect these interpretations to broader social structures in which biographies are located. Rooted in the foundations of symbolic interactionism, interpretive interactionism is in most senses a phenomenological position, drawing together ideas from both symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics (Schwandt, 1998). It is thus useful to (briefly) rehearse some of the foundations upon which interpretive interactionism rests.

Symbolic interactionism asserts three premises: “First, human beings act...in their environment on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them. Second, these meanings derive from the social interaction...between and among individuals. Communication is symbolic because we communicate via languages and other symbols. Third these meanings are established and modified through an interpretive process” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 233). Interpretive interactionism is critical of this particular version of symbolic interactionism as it appears to remain locked in a “naïve empirical realism” (p. 234). According to Schwandt (1998), symbolic interactionists assert that meaning is derived *from* social interaction, not constituted *within these interactions*. It would seem that symbolic interactionism is unable to shed the dualism of subjective and objective (Schwandt, 1998). Denzin (2001) is more preoccupied with enjoining the researcher to the process of understanding. For Denzin (2001), meaning is mutually created, shared, and connected to broader social structures that shape interaction.

From this viewpoint then, meanings about the world in which we live are part of a series of ongoing interactions between actors within a social world. Logically then, if reality is defined in this way, the way in which the researcher attempts to gather data must embrace the interconnected nature of her relationship with what must be known. This means that

the researcher is tied to the process of meaning making with her participants. Assumptions about reality for interpretive interactionists i.e. that reality is shared and co-constructed in ongoing interactions informs how the researcher is able to engage in a particular methodology (e.g. interviewing). The relationship between researcher and her subjects cannot be *just any* relationship as she is enjoined to the research process. The relationship that researcher and participant share implies that neither researcher nor participant stands outside of the process. The researcher must listen to the participant's story and "wander with" the participant as she tells her story (Kvale, 1996, p. 4).

Interpretive interactionism seeks to engage critically with the tensions between private and public, political and personal precisely because interpretive interactionism, as a methodology, allows a space for both participants' voices well as the voice of researcher to be heard (Denzin, 2001). This means that all interpretive research, though using the stories of the participants, "begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher" (Denzin, 2001, p. 32). People's biographies are tied to the social arrangements that shape these experiences.

It is because of the above assumptions of interpretive interactionism that the researcher must be present in the text and that in the interpretation of her data, the researcher must declare her values. This particular study emerged from the idea that I identify my mother as my 'best friend', so it is of utmost importance that my own position as the researcher be located within this study. Within the ongoing process of interpretation, my own position as a daughter necessarily constrained and generated particular versions or interpretations. The interpretive interactionist researcher works in a way that acknowledges the way that "the researcher is historically and locally situated within the very process being studied. A gendered, historical self is brought to this process. This self, as a set of shifting identities, has its own history with the situated practices that define and shape the public issues and private troubles being studied" (Denzin, 2001, p.

3). Similarly, Kvale (1996) argues for “the researcher as person” (p. 117). By doing this Kvale (1996) and Denzin (2001) both highlight the ways in which the data collected depends particularly on the researcher.

In this view then, it is not possible to disentangle my own position from the research process, and this must necessarily have a role to play in how I interpret the participants’ meanings. The emphasis within interpretive interactionism is that people’s stories are told, and in their own terms, but these meanings can always be interpreted. The nature of social reality is according to Mills (1963, in Denzin, 2001) “human beings live in a second hand world. Existence is not determined solely by interaction, or by social acts” (p. x). Human beings can therefore never access reality directly, and in fact, all we can do is “study representations of it” (Denzin, 2001, p. x). Experience, in all its multiple representations, can only ever be known, and interpreted, through its mediated forms (Denzin, 2001). This research was designed with this effect taken into consideration. Furthermore, this must be addressed in the analysis of the data. The findings drawn from this study can in no way be a conclusive or overriding version of the participants’ reality. Instead, the researcher as a person is fore-grounded within both the data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Researcher Biography

This study began with a disclosure to my supervisor, Prof. Bradbury that I consider my mother to be my ‘best friend’. It was out of that disclosure that this project took root. This study never sought to make direct comparisons between my own biography and understanding of my mother as my ‘best friend’ and those of my participants. The interactions shared with the participants in this study can be described as collaborative as I disclosed my own position to them prior to each interview, and they in fact self-

identified for participation in the study as similarly considering their mothers to be their 'best friends'. I realise that it is not enough to say that these interactions were collaborative purely because I made my own positioning clear to the participants. However, my own understandings of what this relationship is about have shifted through the course of this project. To my mind, collaboration has occurred because the participants in this study have assisted me in understanding my own mother-daughter relationship *differently*. Furthermore, my initial assumptions about what it means to call your mother/ daughter your 'best friend' have shifted in significant ways.

I began this study with what could be termed naïve assumptions about what it means to define the mother-daughter relationship as friendship. I believed that understanding the relationship as friendship performed a solely positive function that other mother-daughter relationships lacked. It could be said that I understood *other* mother-daughter relationships in a way that is *othering* i.e. I understood these relationships as deficient. For example, some of my assumptions centred on the general ease of relating between two women, that having a mother as a 'best friend' made it possible to negotiate particular issues that typical mother-daughter relationships could not (or found it difficult to do so). Overall, I assumed that having a mother for a 'best friend' was a move in an entirely positive direction for both mothers and daughters. I did not expect to find that there are significant imbalances and disconnections in this relationship. The participants in this study have caused me to probe my own understandings indeed at times they have *shifted* many of my previous assumptions.

3.2.2 Participation

Eight women were interviewed in this study, three of the women were connected generationally: Helen (grandmother/mother), AnnMarie (mother/daughter) and Prue (daughter). I was also able to interview a mother-daughter pair Nadine (mother) and Lyndall (Nadine's daughter). The three other young women interviewed were all

daughters: Laleti, Palesa and Olive³. Participation in this study was voluntary and women consented to participate in two separate and taped interviews at the university. Initially participants were approached to be interviewed in pairs i.e. I framed the request for participants as mothers and daughters to each other. Classes at third year and honours level were approached and young women who identified with their mothers as their 'best friend' were asked to volunteer participation. The initial request to interview paired mothers and daughters (although separately) may have been the reason for a poor response, there may have been other reasons too, but I can only speculate as to what they may have been.

Although the participants are both black African and white and come from a range of socio-economic and cultural contexts, the study is not framed comparatively. Instead, this study sought to be able to say something about what this relationship meant to these particular participants, all of whom identify their mothers as their 'best friends', and to explore what 'psychological work' is done through talking about this relationship as friendship.

3.2.3 Participants' Biographies

3.2.3.1. Multigenerational Connections

Helen: Mother to AnnMarie and Grandmother to Prue

Helen is a 75 year old mother of two daughters; one of whom I interviewed, AnnMarie. She says that she had her children late in life. She divorced her husband when AnnMarie was a year old and met Nick later on. She and Nick have been together for almost 40 years although they have never married. Helen has worked most of her life and supported her family when she was younger. Today she lives with her youngest daughter AnnMarie

³ The names used here are not the participants' real names. The names used for the purposes of this study are representative of important South African women. These are names of women who have in some way or another, contributed to the history of South Africa, who represent strength and are a source of inspiration to me.

and her children in a separate cottage to AnnMarie's house. Helen occasionally helps AnnMarie out in the home by cooking for the family and her and Nick often visit and eat with AnnMarie and her girls.

AnnMarie: Daughter of Helen and Mother to Prue

AnnMarie is 39 years old with two daughters: Prue whom I also interviewed (14) and Cat (10). AnnMarie is a post-graduate student at an institute for higher education and is a married woman. At the time of these interviews, AnnMarie's husband had suddenly become ill and was not living with the family. AnnMarie's father is divorced from her mother and she has had very little interaction with her him. She is in close contact with her mother's partner Nick because he lives with Helen on AnnMarie's property. Nick helps AnnMarie to care for her two daughters by taking them to and fetching them from school when needed.

Prue: Daughter of AnnMarie

Prue is 14 years old at and she is in grade 9 at high school. She lives with her mother, and her grandmother lives on the same property in a separate granny flat. Prue has a sister who is 10 years old and her father, being ill, is cared for outside of the home- he does not live with them.

3.2.3.2 Mother - Daughter Pair

Nadine: Mother to Lyndall

Nadine is a mother of three children, two girls and a boy. Lyndall (21 at the time of the interview) is Nadine's eldest daughter, Martine her younger daughter was 17 at the time of the study and Nicky is her son who at the time of the interviews was 15. Nadine works part time and is married to Richard whose work often takes him away overseas for long stretches of time. Nadine also has two other sisters who live in the same town as her, and her parents, still alive live in another province. Lyndall is not Richard's biological child. Nadine was previously married however, her husband was killed in a vehicle accident.

Lyndall: Daughter of Nadine

Lyndall, at the time of these interviews (in 2004) was 21 years old. She is a post-graduate student at an institution for higher education. She lives with her mother and stepfather Richard (although she never tells me that her father is her stepfather) and her sister and brother (who are her half siblings).

3.2.3.3 Daughters (whose mothers I did not interview)

Laleti

Laleti is a 35-year-old woman working at a local university. She is a mother of two children and has chosen to remain unmarried to their father, although she is still in a relationship with him. Her children do not live with her as they live with her own father in another province as he cares for them. Laleti's mother passed away 2 years prior to our interview, when Laleti was 32. She has three sisters and one brother. She does not share a particularly close relationship with any of them and she is the eldest child.

Olive

At the time of our interviews, Olive had just turned 21 and she is a postgraduate student at an institution for higher education. She has one sister who at the time was 25 and she lives with her mother and father who are still married. She has a boyfriend that she describes as her 'best friend' too. Despite a number of requests to interview her mother, Olive avoided them resulting in me being unable to interview her mother.

Palesa

Palesa is 21 years old, a postgraduate student at an institution for higher education and is originally from another Southern African country. Palesa has three sisters, two older and one younger. Her father passed away when she was a young girl and she used to live with her mother. I was unable to interview her mother as she lives in another Southern African Country.

3.3 Data Collection

Accessing participants at the outset of the study did not seem to present any problems. I had planned to visit a number of third year university classes and asking young women who considered their mothers to be their 'best friend' to take part in the study. At each class, I gave a brief overview of the study and its aims. I had deliberately asked for women who identified with their mothers this way as I wanted to explore what talking about their relationship in this way does for the pair. In each class I approached, the response was fair as I managed to get between four or five names out of each class. The participants that did agree to participate met with me prior to each interview to explain more fully the nature of the project and answer any questions that they may have had. It was at this meeting that we agreed on a date and time. However, there was considerable drop-out after the first response.

In retrospect, I can speculate about the reasons for this. I had asked for women who identified with their mothers as their best friend and stated that I would interview both mother and daughter. I suspect that for some young women, having their mothers participate in the same study may have discouraged their own participation. This concern was affirmed when looking at the data gained from the first interviews where a mother and daughter pair were interviewed separately. In these interviews, there was a sense that the participants, especially the daughter, were holding back in some ways. While it cannot be said with absolute certainty that this was because it was requested that both mother and daughter be interviewed, I did get this sense from them. It was later decided through the course of the project to interview more daughters without necessarily including their mothers in the study.

3.3.1 Interviewing

It was decided that interviewing would be the best method for data collection, as it provides rich and complex data for each participant. Participants in this study were interviewed twice for one hour per interview. Interviews were conducted at the University of KwaZulu Natal in a postgraduate room and all interviews were taped and transcribed. No translations were necessary as all the interviews were conducted in English.

Before beginning the interviews, a number of key research questions were identified. These questions did not lead to a schedule of questions for interviewing, rather these questions were used as a means to cover a range of issues that the research needed to explore, and they acted as a frame for each interview. No two interviews looked or sounded alike as specific questions were different for each participant and at times interviews were led by participant's own talking. I often found myself not having to ask many questions at all as some participants needed very little prompting. I also found that in answering my questions, participants told me the story of their lives to communicate their answers. This made it possible to explore unexpected areas unique to each participant.

Some of the key research questions framing this project included:

1. What does it mean for the mother-daughter relationship to be defined as friendship?
2. In what ways does the mother-daughter friendship resemble other friendships?
3. What other roles do these women connect with their identity?
4. How does this relationship connect with other relationships in these women's lives?
5. Do these daughters view their mothers as role models, as identified trajectories of future selves?

6. Do these mothers see their daughters as like themselves at the same age? (What are the similarities/ differences?)
7. In conversations between mother and daughter, what is disclosed or omitted? How does this compare with what they disclose in other relationships?

3.4 Analytic Framework

This study adopts a qualitative thematic analysis that converges on the nuances and details of people's experiences (Ezzy, 2002). Although there is an explicit focus on people's own interpretations of their experiences, this mode of analysis does not work with data in a way that allows themes to simply emerge from the data as would be the case with grounded theory (Joffe & Yardley, 2003). Precisely because thematic analysis works from the starting point of theory and moves through data to arrive at particular analytical junctures the researcher is able to begin the analysis with a set of themes pre-identified. To this end, thematic analysis is useful for the way in which deeply personal accounts of people's lived experience can be connected to theoretical accounts that either work to help account for these experiences, or pave the way for new theorising about such experiences (Ezzy, 2002).

Beginning from a theoretical position enables the researcher to impose a particular set of codes or themes on the data, making it possible to work with masses of raw data and begin a purposeful analysis (Hayes, 1997; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006; Joffe & Yardley, 2003). However, unlike content analysis, thematic analysis does not assume a set of themes that overrides the data. Indeed, the use of thematic analysis makes it possible for themes to be determined before the study through the use of contextualising theory while also allowing new themes to emerge from the data through sensitivity and openness to what the data suggest (Ezzy, 2002; Joffe & Yardley, 2003).

Thematic analysis thus begins with a rigorous and thorough determination of the theoretical landscape relevant to the study subject so as to focus analysis sufficiently to address the key questions being raised within the study. However Yardley & Joffe (2003) caution that one must remain sufficiently open to the data because “there would be little point in doing research if one were not simultaneously open to the data and what they might offer anew in terms of the theory’s development or refutation” (p. 59).

The suggestion that researchers remain ‘open’ to the data implies that researchers read not only for manifest themes in the data, but also latent themes (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006). Henwood & Pidgeon explain the key difference between manifest and latent meanings:

“In interpretivist approaches to qualitative thematic analysis there is an important distinction between manifest meaning (*viz.* obvious meanings in the data) and latent meaning (which have to be inferred by the researcher). As latent meanings require inferring to other parts of the data to discern what they signify, their analysis involves a process of ‘contextualisation’, a key element in interpretative practice” (p. 356).

Although a thematic framework enables particular theoretically derived themes to arrange a mass of data, a thorough working with data and intimate attention to individual frameworks for particular participants makes it possible for newer, latent themes to emerge. These latent themes can be connected between participants to generate a theoretical structure for the personal accounts of peoples’ experiences in connection with the theoretical threads identified at the outset of analysis (Millward, 2006).

Familiarisation with the theoretical context within which this study is located as well as the data set provided initial themes that would enable a focussed analysis to begin. It must at this point be asserted that these themes did not simply *emerge* from the data as would be expected in a grounded approach. I approached the data set expecting to find

data clustered around particular thematic concerns, for example issues around gender, identity, boundaries and disclosure. I initially anticipated that the mother-daughter relationships I was about to encounter were in *most* ways positive and so the themes I was expecting to find were mostly located around sensitivity, friendship and predominant positive effects of the relationship for both women. I generally anticipated positive effects for conceptualising the mother-daughter relationship as friendship.

However, I simultaneously remained sensitive, open and responsive to the data and further reading revealed significant and emergent themes. For example, through working with the data and participants own accounts of their relationships with their mothers, it became apparent that daughters' descriptions of their mother-daughter relationships were *contingent* on descriptions of their relationships with their fathers about which they chose to talk in unanticipated detail. In many ways these descriptions appear as oppositional and suggest that it was necessary for the participants to talk about their relationships with their fathers in order to communicate something about the quality of the relationships with their mothers. This emergent theme concentrated attention on the gendered nature of the mother-daughter relationship that articulates with, but couldn't fully have been anticipated by, the theoretical framework of the study. Further, while the possibilities for intimacy through talk were suggested by the literature (e.g. Walker, 1994) the importance of the converse (latent) theme of silence was emergent through attendance to the data. Likewise, the central manifest theme of equality that characterises any relationship of friendship and the researcher's initial positive constructions of this conceptualisation of the mother-daughter relationship was challenged by the strength of the latent theme of regulation that permeated the participants' talk.

The analysis began by compiling 'thick descriptions' for each participant's data set. Denzin (2001) describes this process as an exploration of individual accounts of personal experience and the researcher's role as to provide new interpretive descriptions of those

accounts that do not merely recapitulate or re-describe the accounts offered by participants. In this way interpretation must aim to work with and add layers to participants' accounts, rather than reducing participants' accounts to bare theoretical or explanatory details. To this end thematic analysis is concerned with the “*differences* in interpretations and experiences among people, events and interactions” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 103, emphasis added) and further aims to connect thick, layered descriptions to social structures that mediate personal experience (Denzin, 2001).

Following this process of thick descriptions for each participant, a set of three key thematic lines were identified: Talk and Disclosure; Gendered Relationships and Regulation. The nuances for each theme, and in particular the connections between themes were only possible because of the movement between participants' accounts and individual frameworks juxtaposed to gain a richer, more detailed understanding of how each theme operated individually as well as more generally within the study.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introducing and Contextualising the Themes

When the women in this study suggest that their mother, in particular is a friend, they are suggesting that as daughters they stand in what appears to be a different relation to their mother to that suggested by the unusual asymmetry of parental relationships. This analysis began with the theme of friendship and equality as this proved to be the primary vehicle through which the participants articulate characteristics of this relationship as unique and different from 'other mother-daughter relationships'⁴. The manifest theme of equality and friendship provided the context within which the inferred latent themes (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006) of Talk and Disclosure; Gendered Relationships and Regulations could be located.

The marker of equality and friendship is the characteristic that the participants use to indicate the uniqueness of this relationship, however further analysis provides the framework through which thick descriptions of the participants' accounts could be connected to broader social structures. The interpretation offered here is only one possible construction of what might be said about this relationship, indeed this is a co-constructed version because although I have stayed sensitive to the voices of the participants, I have also followed particular connections between thematic threads. The assertion of friendship implies that one's an equal and while the study challenges this conception, it simultaneously acknowledges the 'voice' of these women in articulating something new about the mother-daughter relationship. This conceptualisation seems to represent a generational shift in how this relationship is spoken about.

⁴ The reference to 'other-mother daughter relationships' is used reflexively to indicate both my own positioning of these relationships as 'other' as well as a general tendency of the women in this study to speak about these relationships as 'other'.

None of the mothers in this study described their own mothers as a best friend and even where they expressed closeness to their mothers, they made it clear that their mother 'remained their mother':

"I didn't have the same sort of relationship with my mom. You know in those days the mom was like *there* (using hands to show above) and I was the *child*. And I think that I always learnt from that. That I was never going to do that. I wanted to be more *with* my kids... She was umm... ended up my best friend. Someone that I could go anywhere with, talk to, that I could visit any time. But when I was younger, we had more of a sort of 'mother-daughter' sort of where the mother was the parent and you didn't question" (Nadine).

Nadine's suggestion that for her the roles of mother and daughter were clearly demarcated by authority indicates that a particular generational shift has occurred. When asked about their own mothers, the mothers in this study suggest that they would not typically refer to their mothers as their friend or at least not their equal. Nadine explains that her mother, although ultimately in adulthood becoming her 'best friend', as a child or as a young woman their relationship was asymmetrical. This was simply how mothers were "in those days", suggesting that it was not something unusual or atypical in their particular relationship, but rather characteristic of a particular context in time. This indicates that, for these younger daughters, referring to one's mother as a *best* friend is a relatively new positioning of mothers in their own families, and possibly in broader social contexts too.

Furthermore, contextualising the mother-daughter relationship within the rubric of friendship makes it possible to explore how talk, gender and regulation constitute this relationship as friendship. The rubric of friendship makes it possible for each woman to consider each other an equal in different ways and this works to produce different forms of relating. For mothers, the assertion that a daughter is an equal shifts the balance of power from a more traditional authoritative position. This has effects for the stability of

the mothering role in that mothers do not stand in a direct relationship of authority to their daughters (particularly for example in relation to their daughters' roles in education and the workplace) and this makes it possible for daughters to assert their own authority. It is within this context that the identified themes of Talk and Disclosure; Gendered Relationships and Regulation are located.

The women in this study choose to identify this relationship as different to other mother-daughter relationships because they consider their mother (or themselves as mothers) to be 'open' to negotiation of the parameters of the relationship, for the most part this implies that negotiation is about *talking*. Mothers and daughters across the data refer to themselves or each other as 'open' over and over again to indicate this as the defining feature of their relationship with each other, and as distinct from 'other mother-daughter relationships'. Talk for mothers and daughters in this study was so significant, that it has been identified as the *key constituent* of this relationship as friendship, furthermore the *nature* of this talk contributes to the levels of intimacy between mother and daughter in such a way that it can (and often does) work to exclude fathers from the interactions that mother and daughter share. The nature of talk is so gendered, and so intimate that it contributes to the way in which the women in this study experience other relationships.

The theme on talk connects with the theme on gendered relationships because in the framing of this relationship as friendship the nature of the interaction between mother and daughter is so particularly symbiotic that it leaves little room for intimacy between father and daughter. Moreover, an exploration of daughters' understandings of the role of fathers revealed connections between masculinity and fatherhood (Mkhize, 2006). The understandings of fathering and masculinity often are conflated and are connected to how the women in this study conceptualise the role of women as mothers for themselves.

Arguments about what constitutes feminine subjectivity that rest on the nature of regulation and monitoring are connected to these gendered understandings of both men's and women's places in the world. The women in this study connect their education with the possibilities for social roles that were not necessarily available to their mothers, while simultaneously producing (and reproducing) understandings about what the role of mother entails. In many ways, the division between public and private remained blurred in this study. I was expecting to find some more concrete shifts across the private/ public divide precisely because the daughters in this study are all well educated women who occupy much more liberated social positionings than their mothers or their grandmothers. However understandings of naturalised female and male roles emerge as deeply entrenched in the categories 'mother' and 'father'. Shifting and destabilising the seeming natural from the seemingly social (and the public from the private) is not merely a project of democratisation rather it is a project of reconceptualising the workings of regulation of subjectivities. Moreover, that regulation cannot be conceived of as something that *happens to* subjects alone, but that particular regulations make positionings of one-self in that regulation possible, indeed comfortable.

4.2 Talk and Disclosure

Talk is not simply something that the women in this study do as mother/ daughter; rather it is argued that talk, and more specifically disclosure, constitute this relationship as friendship. Distinguishing this relationship as friendship is connected to women's own understanding of talk as distinctive of their female friendships and the notion that women learn to engage in (and increase) intimacy with others through talk. For the women in this study, being able to talk to their mother/ daughter about particular things and being able to do so in a particular way, is what makes this relationship like friendship.

Asking participants to describe the relationship that they have with their mother or daughter produced responses that generally centred on descriptions of closeness, openness, and equality; or they explicitly referred to the relationship as like 'friendship'. This relationship is 'like friendship' for the women in this study because interactions are connected to talk and (perhaps more importantly) *how* they are able to talk. Participants feel they can talk to their mother/ daughter about anything and for this reason, they consider their mother/ daughter to be their 'best friend'. Communication and talk separate this relationship from other family relationships and, perhaps more significantly, from other mother-daughter relationships:

"I am much closer to my mom than I am to my dad. My dad and I often have disagreements and things like that...I tell her basically everything" (Olive).

This participant is asserting 'talk' as the definitive way in which the relationship she has with her mother is different from the relationship she has with her father.

Like Olive, AnnMarie also suggests that talk is what defines this relationship as different from relationships that she and her mother share with other people in their family. The relationship that Helen (grandmother of Prue and mother to AnnMarie) has with her adult daughters remains defined by the ways in which they can talk:

"Interestingly enough, her relationship with us is still very strong, stronger than it is with the grandchildren because if she can be with us talking to us, she would rather be doing that" (AnnMarie).

Women in this study indicated that they considered their own mother-daughter relationships as distinct from others because of the quality of their talk:

"I get the sense that my friend cant, her relationship with her mom is different to mine 'cos she can't... they don't really have conversations about things. The communications very abrupt and you know normally, kind of ends very abruptly" (Lyndall).

A lack of communication signalled, for the participants in this study, a mother-daughter relationship 'gone bad'. For example, Palesa feels that during periods of her life in which she and her mother were unable to sit and talk, so she felt her mother was her 'enemy':

"The fact that I think...we were enemies we used to fight a lot, we could not talk about anything. But the fact that now we can be able to sit down and communicate, sit down and be able to chat about stuff and really be open to her"
(Palesa).

For Palesa, this friendship is about 1) being able to talk to her mother about various things and 2) feeling that she can 'really be open to her'. There was a shift in this relationship: from not being able to talk at all, to being able to 'chat about stuff and be really open'. For Palesa this move from not talking to talking openly is the significant difference between 'being friends' and not 'being friends'.

Mothers and daughters often stated that they could tell each other almost anything, although they also felt that there were things that go 'unsaid', things that they do not necessarily share with each other. In many ways, what is spoken about marks the boundaries of this relationship, however, those things that are not said also frame and structure what is said between mother and daughter:

"I would say that we have a very close relationship and we talk about *most* things that would worry her; um she can pick up what is worrying me. So in that way I would say that we tend to look out for each other" (Nadine).

The 'closeness' that this mother feels with her daughter is constituted through talk but this closeness further enables an intuitive connection that they share beyond words.

However, silences do not always indicate an intuitive closeness. AnnMarie feels a particular sense of connection with her mother that has shifted with her mother's and her own aging. Both women notice the change in time spent with their mother, although talking about it does not happen:

“I find as I have more and more things to do I do find my mom umm wants time from me which I’m not always able to give. And I think she misses that. She misses that.

Lara: But how do you, do you ever talk about that at all?

We actually haven’t. No we haven’t” (AnnMarie).

For AnnMarie, silences enable her to continue to share a connection with her mother through caring for her in this way.

Similar to the other participants, there are details about her mother’s life that Palesa does not really know the details of:

“Lara: And your mom, and how did your mom feel about his girlfriends?

She didn’t really talk about it, she would mention them like now, here and there that this was happening like when my dad passed away they some, I don’t know, some company who was in charge, but one of the women took the car and it was, I don’t know what was happening really but I still don’t know even now” (Palesa).

For each participant the relationship they have with their mother/ daughter is constituted through talk and silences. Talk works to connect women as much as the silences as the details shared or withheld enable each woman to continue the relationship as ‘friendship’.

4.2.1 Let’s Talk Intimacy: Openness and Availability

In line with gendered understandings of identity, female identity is defined through connection (Jordan, 1993; Lawler, 2000; Schreurs, 1993). Participants suggest that for them connection with other women happens predominantly through talk as it affords a heightened sense of intimacy through disclosure in the mother-daughter relationship. When a mother-daughter relationship is characterised by little (or no) talk then the participants in this study considered those relationships poor or ‘not good’. When a mother-daughter relationship is constituted by interactions that are characterised by high

levels of talk and disclosure, then this produces different understandings of the relationship. Talking makes disclosure possible between mother and daughter and high levels of disclosure characterise this relationship as 'open'.

The women in this study reflect on talking with other people in their families but also claim that the quality or form of this 'talk' is very different:

"My relationship with my dad, I don't, I mean I can talk to him about things, but I don't feel like he is as easy to communicate with... its more, its not really a conversation, its communication with him... I have a more emotional bond with my mom, I feel I can express feelings and thoughts ...I can't do [that] with my dad, 'cos I'm just not on the same, emotional connection with him" (Lyndall).

This analysis suggests that the nature of talk between mother and daughters in this study differed from the nature of talk participants experienced with other family members. Lyndall expresses a distinction between 'communication' with her father and the 'emotional connection' she shares with her mother. The difference in talking to her mother is that with her mother talk is about more than a conversational exchange of information (as she may have with her father); Lyndall feels she can reveal her emotions or feelings, perhaps even her-self to her mother. This is a particularly gendered interaction because connection through emotion is the encouraged mode of interaction for women, and not traditionally men (Schreurs, 1993).

It was suggested that the particular genderedness of talk makes it difficult for girls to connect through disclosure with their fathers and *vice versa*. In this understanding, girls can talk to their fathers but it produces a different form of relating compared with that between mother and daughter. Conversation with others is not a guarantee for intimacy.

The participants in this study indicated that 'real talking' is about disclosure:

"Like when friends come to my house, you know they talk to my mom, and my mom communicates with them, it's kind of like; you know we'll talk about the

same things. You know we'll talk about boys but when we go to her house we are in the room and the mom is in the kitchen and you know there is no real communication there" (Lyndall).

It cannot be possible that the mother and daughter in this house that Lyndall talks about do not ever talk; what is possible is that this mother and daughter do not talk *in the way* that the mother and daughters in this study do. Disclosure through talk brings the pair closer, and the boundaries of the relationship are shaped, stretched, and extended through this particular kind of talk.

4.2.2 Talk Is Action

Mothers and daughters use talk as the primary mode through which they can engage in intimate interaction. Activities such as shopping, cooking, and going for coffee are all things that mothers and daughters do together, but these activities are the means through which talk and disclosure are possible. It is not an uncommon understanding that 'going out' is not necessarily about going somewhere to drink coffee, to shop, or to go out to eat (as activity); rather it is about talking:

"Like we would go for coffee and like 5 hours later we would stumble home and we had been talking the whole time [laughs]" (Nadine, talking about her mother).

Going for coffee is incidental, what she remembers is that they went somewhere and talked for '5 hours'. Unlike other hypothetical mother-daughter relationships, the women in this study place talk central to the things that they do together. Prue suggests that the relationship with her mother is not based on a range of activities that they do together:

"We sometimes talk late into the night and I tell her all the problems that have been happening to me in the last week or something and she will tell me things or when I need to discuss something with her I like, we will have a moment to talk. We don't really do a bunch, many activities together it's just the special times we get to talk" (Prue).

Likewise, Laleti refers to shared activities as a kind of background to talking with her mother:

“You know we used to love shopping, and I remember we used to go to Steers...we would sit there, order food and we would *talk*. You know about who is coming in my life, who is not coming in my life, umm. How I want to spend my money, buying things, you know clothes, and she never imposed anything on me” (Laleti).

Talk is therefore a central feature of this relationship for the many ways that it structures and arranges the relationship. It would appear that gendered understandings of how women and men relate within the boundaries of friendship are reproduced, as women are understood to connect through talk while men are assumed to connect through shared activities (Reid & Fine, 1992; Rubin, 1985; Walker, 1994; Wright, 1982). For these women clearly talk rather than activities defines their relationship as friendship. Furthermore, the brand of friendship shared between mother and daughter has a typically feminine dimension attached to it, loaded with the qualities of empathy and non-judgement that make talk and disclosure possible.

Just as significantly, listening is the converse process that makes openness and availability possible.

“My best friend might not be able to be there for me to talk, and I can turn around and talk to my mom about it...to just, you know if somebody needs to talk to kinda just let them talk and not make judgements until after” (Lyndall).

The participants in this study maintain that their mothers reserve judgment or in some way are ‘non-judgemental’ of what they tell them and that this makes talking to their mothers easy:

“Lara: She is obviously very easy to talk to?”

Ja, very easy, she is very open and she doesn’t judge a lot ...she seems like she is at my level so she doesn’t make any judgements” (Prue).

Importantly, the ability to reserve judgement seems to rest as much on what is said as what is not said. Mothers are able to withhold judgement as daughters only tell mothers what they think is enough, to this end, the level of openness that daughters engage in with their mothers makes this non-judgemental quality possible in their interactions.

Furthermore, the level of disclosure that each participant engaged in with their mother/daughter determined (to a large degree) the openness they each experience. Openness in this relationship is connected dynamically to what is spoken about between mother and daughter. For daughters, talking openly with their mothers was important, particularly because they felt that their mothers were non-judgemental of them in this talk. However, talking (and listening) is also determined by what is not talked about. For example, Lyndall suggests that she does not go into the same amount of detail with her mother as she would with her friends:

“With the best friend it’s easier to go into the nitty gritty details about the boyfriend ... You know with my mom I do go into detail...but you have respect for one another ... You are not going to explain something to someone in its really vulgar sense...If you got really drunk in a nightclub, you’re not going to tell her exactly what you had to drink, or the way you were falling over the stairs...she doesn’t kind of need to know all of that...it’s almost...a sense of respect as to not kind of...maybe not respect, but kind of not going into the details...I mean it’s, it’s best friends. Or friends like to go into detail, whereas I might not be able to go into detail ... she knows enough about it to know I can talk openly about it...so I think that’s in a sense how different we are at communicating” (Lyndall).

What is spoken about is just as important as what is left out. Daughters only tell their mothers things that they think their mothers can handle, and so daughters are able to ensure that the experience of ‘open talking’ can continue. Conversely, mothers do not ask about these details as this too can interfere with how open daughters decide to be in future. Disclosure and the omission of details work to maintain this relationship as

friendship even when it is obviously different to other kinds of friendships the women each may have. What is important are the different ways that talk and disclosure can determine the level of openness and intimacy experienced by mother and daughter.

4.2.3 Talking Is Support, and Support Is Skewed!

When asked about their relationship and how it differs from other mother-daughter relationships (or from other relationships in their lives), all the women in this study referred to a level of openness that distinguishes this relationship as friendship and that this openness was experienced as *supportive*. In this analysis, support is talk and support is accessed in forms such as listening, trusting, 'not judging', suggesting, facilitation, guidance, and advice. Being 'open' with each other depends on how available each woman in this relationship appears to the other. This availability may not always be equal and the claims that each participant can make to support may not benefit both mother and daughter equally.

Here Lyndall is suggesting that the kind of help she can offer her mother is important, as she does not see that her mother may access support elsewhere. It is primarily daughters who depend (and heavily so) on mothers being available for support (through talk). This support and availability is largely determined by the extent to which mothers are physically available to their daughters. Lyndall's understanding of her mother's work life suggests something about the way in which daughters interpret mothers' availability in important ways:

"My mom's never really...I mean she's always had a temp job...I remember my mom kind of has never had a steady eight to five job and I remember her being at home more than I ever remember her going out and working...She works until one so she can be at home for us...She kind of works around us... It's not a case of she's not at home all day at home 'cos she always is...there to talk to and you know helping you with your homework is also something that creates that

relationship with her also” (Lyndall).

For Lyndall, her mother’s part time work has made it possible for her to access support from her mother. She states quite explicitly that her mother being at home has made it possible, indeed created, their relationship in important ways. Her view is that this support is mutual and that her mother derives very important support from talking things through with her. She indicates that she is open to her mother, and in turn, her mother is able to access the support that Lyndall may offer:

“...I have helped her a lot as well, when she has needed to talk... I can talk to my mom but like I’d hate to think what would happen if my mom couldn’t talk to me....they are also going through phases and changing. And you know for her to go through things... and not having anybody... that she can talk to about it I think that is hard for them as well, trying to always be strong and you know, sometimes she just needs to talk” (Lyndall).

Contrary to Lyndall’s understanding, the balance of support offered (and taken) does not actually appear even between this mother and daughter. Lyndall’s mother suggests that outside of her children she can and often does use work as a kind of outlet for her stress:

“I think you need also the working because you need it as an outlet as well... ‘cos the mothering part is extremely emotionally draining... You are dealing with these little people all the time, they always, they hang on me and I find it terribly maybe I get too involved, I don’t know... Work is like a release, it shouldn’t be, you know but it is. You know it’s somewhere where you shut those out for a bit... You know I need a balance like that in my life” (Nadine).

Work is, for Nadine a means to deal with the emotional drain that is part of being a mother, as an outlet for stress. Work is a place where she can ‘shut out’ being a mother for a bit and achieve some sort of ‘balance’. That this mother’s identity is based on more than being a mother alone is obscured for her daughter and supports the argument that women’s identity is defined in multiple ways (Billington et al., 1998; Bjerrum Nielsen, 1993; De Waal 1993). Nadine understands her own identity as located outside of being a

mother and she suggests that she does have alternative ways to deal with her stress.

Mothers appear more accessible to daughters when they are 'at home' and even women who work are positioned by their daughters in ways that suggests this, work appears secondary to the role of being a mother. The ways in which openness and support works in this relationship appears skewed as Lyndall implies that her mother's work is secondary to forming a relationship with her children and this relationship is viewed solely as 'supportive' for mothers rather than itself a kind of work and source of stress.

In a similar way to Lyndall, AnnMarie suggests that her mother has worked for reasons that are less about another facet of her identity as a (working) woman than about having to earn money to make a 'better' education possible for her daughters:

"My mom worked very hard for, we never had money when we were young. She worked very hard to send us to private school. We never had luxuries or anything like that, but she was always demonstrative with her love... She did when we were growing up, because she supported us umm she always mostly worked half day, so we never had extra money but she always had the afternoon with us... only at a certain number of years at high school she had to work full day. Where she was trying to make the extra money that was the time when she wasn't home"
(AnnMarie).

Helen's work seems to AnnMarie to be primarily to support her family; work was a means to earn an income. This is only half the case for when Helen speaks about her time working she clearly receives a great satisfaction not only for being able to remain as independent as she has been but also for the nature of the work and the social world in which she participated:

"I did auditing the whole thing you know...and I actually enjoyed it because we worked with a whole lot of girls...and we used to have fun in Cape Town. We used to go to the pub for lunch and that was fun" (Helen).

Helen suggests that work for her is not just about earning money, but for her the memory of working with other women and being able to enjoy lunchtimes with them is a part of her working identity. Furthermore, the *nature* of her work was also important:

“I liked the methodical bookkeeping thing you know, everything must pan out at the end, and it gives you great satisfaction you know when you have done... at the end of the day everything worked out exactly right and that, that gives you the thrill of your life. And you know when you are an auditor that gives you such delight” (Helen).

Lyndall and AnnMarie are both suggesting that in their understandings as daughters, work for mothers is not necessarily another dimension to their mothers' identities and that work is arranged around the needs of their children. Other than talking with Lyndall, it appears to Lyndall as though her mother does little else but simply copes with the stress she faces. Lyndall suggests that her mother keeps just going on (selflessly) because that is 'just what she does' and that is just who her mother is:

“It does actually amaze me that she can be like really angry inside and still smile and still carry on like everything is okay and be extremely exhausted and smiling ...I think you know she kind of does it because she just, that is the way that she can just carry on going being happy and keep everybody else and you know not just kind of making everybody have to deal with her problem” (Lyndall).

Support depends on whether each person, in their role, is available to the other. When mothers are perceived to be entirely available to their children then support appears to work in ways that benefit daughters as they can call on the support they require without reservation. Particularly important for this analysis is whether mothers feel that they can do the same thing:

“They will all, they can see something before I have to ask them, you know I will say I'm tired and they will say: 'Okay mom, we will help you'. Umm, [pause] or

they'll, it's hard to say...I don't want to burden them with it, you know its not fair of me to just burden them with it, they will just pick it up and they will just, I don't know, just come and give me a hug and then I will feel like maybe I can go on again" (Nadine).

Nadine acknowledges the ways in which her children support her as she feels she can talk to them but she also suggests that possible claims to that support do not work evenly. Nadine suggests that if she claimed support whenever she needed it (as daughters in this study all said they could) then she would be 'burdening' her children with her needs. Although mother and daughter are both able to claim support, they do so unequally. This daughter can claim support from her mother as and when she needs it. It is acceptable for daughters to lean on their mothers. Support however, does not work in the same way for mothers who restrict what they talk to their daughters about.

Laleti suggests that in retrospect she does not feel that she supported her mother in the way that she possibly should have:

"Lara: There were a lot of times, when your mom had been there for you and helped support you, can you think of a time when you had to do that for her?"

When the chance came, I never did. I think I was selfish,

Lara: What do you mean?

Because mom had cancer...and I was working...and instead of being there for her in terms of maybe coming down [moving to be with her mother], making sure I'm changing jobs so that I could spend more time with her, I didn't do that. But she never asked me to do that either" (Laleti).

Laleti suggests, and movingly so, that in her mother-daughter relationship support did not flow evenly. Remarkably, Laleti suggests that her mother never asked her for support, and so, like with Lyndall and Nadine, these mothers do not ask for help, as mothers' need for support is often placed as secondary to daughters' needs. Laleti says in her own words

more succinctly what this analysis is suggesting: that mothers' support is taken for granted precisely because that is what mothers do, it is what is expected:

“And she was there for me when I really, kind of like, ‘did I make the right decision?’ you know and she was so supportive, very supportive as a parent. And to be really honest, I never admired that. That was just an oversight, she had to do that, she was my mother” (Laleti).

A different kind of interaction occurs for AnnMarie and Prue whereby disclosure appears to work in both directions. Prue has access to her mother's experiences and in some ways this relates to the “relational triangular” that de Kanter (1993, p. 28) argues for. Too often in studies that take mothers as their subject, the broader female subjectivity of the mother is lost in exploring the mother/child dyad. In this analysis, I seek to show how some daughters in this study are able to interpret their mother's experiences outside of what it means to be a mother. In many ways, Prue has an understanding of her mother as a woman, and feels that she is able to relate to her mother outside of her mother's caring role:

“I can relate a lot more to her, its more kind of a relationship now, before it was more her caring for me and looking after me, and now its more friends and I look to her for support a lot” (Prue).

Furthermore, Prue demonstrates an intimate knowledge of her mother's circumstances and the implications these have had for her female subjectivity:

“Well I know that she doesn't want to live her whole life without anybody because she sometimes tells me that she gets very lonely... when we move out she won't have anybody...She will have the house but it wont be the same and she needs a lot, she needs support... she is starting a new life and she is doing all the things she has always wanted to do that she never did do and she is actually a very different person to how she was before” (Prue).

The insight that Prue displays in understanding her mother was, for me, remarkable. I was not expecting to find daughters who understood so profoundly the situatedness of being a woman for their mothers. There is a level of openness that unusually, moves in two directions. On one hand (perhaps more typically) AnnMarie is aware of the details about Prue's life while on the other hand Prue (less typically) knows a great deal of what it means for AnnMarie to be a woman outside of her role as being a mother. This mother and daughter pair demonstrate a heightened sense of intimacy, perhaps deriving from treating one another as women rather than just a mother or a daughter. There is an indication that this particular participant has awareness of her mother's womanness, that indeed for her, her mother is a situated woman (de Kanter, 1993). However, she is unusual in that the literature suggests that for the most part the role of mother often eclipses the role of 'woman' (Burman, 1994; Lawler, 2000).

4.2.4 Openness and Sexuality: “She was very open...very open about sex... she was an absolute open book” (AnnMarie).

When daughters suggest they can talk to their mother about 'anything', what is really implied is that they can talk to their mother about issues around sex. These are typically things that not all daughters can speak to their mothers about, or at least when they do, it is a site of contention (Aapola et al., 2005). Although there are constraints on the extent to which issues around sex are discussed, this is (ultimately) what defines the relationship as open even where such understandings are tacit:

“Things that go unsaid she knows anyway, just from knowing me. Umm ja like we are very close, I speak to her about everything.

Lara: What kinds of things unsaid?

Umm well sexual things... she knows about my habits...she knows I'm on the pill... and we go get it together...but ...I would never sit there...like ... you have got to have a balance...some of my friends will sit there and talk about like sex

tips with their mother... and somehow I think you know that is just ...beyond what I would consider” (Olive).

‘Talking openly’ for the women in this study works to produce particular interactions; mothers and daughters feel that they can talk about issues related to sexuality (such as *ilobolo*- bridewealth; and the contraceptive pill). At the same time however, ‘talking openly’ also entails silences and moments where the women choose not to disclose to one another. These silences are as instrumental in defining mother-daughter relationships in terms of the content of what is and is not, spoken about.

In the following analysis I have included excerpts from Prue, her mother AnnMarie and AnnMarie’s mother Helen, to demonstrate how talking openly about birth control structured their interactions. These women across three generations, show how negotiating contraceptive pill usage is an interaction that is a mix of openness (to a degree), closure, resistance and silences that result in daughters internalising these processes as self-regulation of their sexuality. Here talking about contraceptive pill usage is not a smooth process and being ‘like friends’ is not a guarantee for conflict free negotiation either. Indeed conversations around birth control reveal the ways in which negotiating control and agency is a contentious process for both mother and daughter.

Both Helen and AnnMarie describe their relationship as ‘open’. For them being open has meant that talk around negotiating when AnnMarie could go onto the contraceptive pill is possible:

“I said to them... both of them, if you ever need to go to have any kind of close relationship with a boy... I will take you to the doctor and you can do something about it... we don’t want to be now stuck with a baby or not know what is happening to you” (Helen).

This is for Helen and AnnMarie the most significant reason they choose to define this relationship as friendship they are open enough with each other to be able to talk about birth control:

“She was very open...very open about sex always as well...she was an absolute open book...She always said, ‘You know, if you meet the right person and you want to go on the pill, you must come and talk to me’” (AnnMarie).

For AnnMarie, her mother’s openness has ensured that there was always a possibility to negotiate particular freedoms and seek support in this relationship. As a mother, Helen has had to consider recent social shifts in the ways in which female sexuality is understood. In part, Helen’s choice to be an ‘open mother’ about birth control is rooted in her own experience as a child:

“I knew that my mother and father had a normal sex life and that was that, there was openness, if I went and saw my mother in the bath it was nothing... I think that our family it was an open family, I mean my mother didn’t explain that with me. I didn’t know what was to come. She didn’t go over birth control and all of that with me but I knew that she had a funny little contrivance that she never used to hide but which I used to see every now and then but I didn’t know then much about those, but it was always open if you know what I mean. We didn’t have any kind of secrecy” (Helen).

Helen sees this openness around sexuality (and birth control) in her childhood home as the basis for the kind of ‘openness’ she shares with her adult daughters now.

Recent shifts in cultural worlds have seen parents faced with a need to ‘loosen up’ and become more tolerant in relation to young women’s developing sexuality. The women in this study are expressing this shift that parents (particularly mothers) face when confronted with their daughters’ sexuality. Helen recalls the moment that AnnMarie came to her to talk about going on the contraceptive pill:

“AnnMarie came to me at this time and... she said to me that she wants to go, she wants to have protection. ... She was 15 going on 16 I don't remember... I said to her 'I don't think, I think you are too young. ...I said well, oh [big sigh] I'm really disappointed in you darling'” (Helen).

However, the openness to talk about such things as birth control is not a guarantee of agreement or ease between mothers and daughters about sexuality. Laleti suggests that the openness between her mother and herself did not necessarily translate into ease in relating to her sexuality:

“I felt that she doubted my principles, quite a lot... even though she was open with these relationships... and I think she kind of went in, too much, into my privacy. Into those issues, and umm I felt very uncomfortable because I sensed that she wasn't trusting things that I told her When I said listen this is what I did ...she would...kind of dig in ...I'd feel very bad about it. Because you know I would expect that its so much that I'm opening up and still felt that no, she doesn't trust, that really I'm not...engaging in any sexual activities. ... 'cos really I was very principled... and she still doubted that you know...I was very, like 'no'” (Laleti).

In the same way that 'openness' makes talking about birth control possible, it also makes conflict around negotiation possible. Because Helen is an 'open mother', she expresses her disappointment at AnnMarie's decision to have sex at this 'young' age and talk between mother and daughter has its limits:

“I remember that night clearly in my head, how difficult it was to ask her...She said, oh you know I think you are too young, I think you should wait, and I don't think that he is the right person, and ja, she was quite open. And it had actually been a huge thing to actually come out and ask... uh you know its quite embarrassing thing to ask your mother even though she is so open” (AnnMarie).

Another participant's experiences in negotiation of *ilobolo* offer another view of sexuality as potential site for resistances and struggles for power. For Palesa, coming from a Sesotho background, the issue of *ilobolo* is pertinent as it is overlaid with cultural expectations about femininity. A woman's worth as potential bride, and indeed as an adult woman, is expressed through *ilobolo* exchanged between the families of bride and groom. Palesa has very strong resistant feelings with regard to *ilobolo*: She plainly does not want it and rejects the practice. In her culture and in her own words this is a 'very difficult' thing to negotiate, and it simply rarely happens at all that a girl can negotiate on an issue as central to culture and to the definition of feminine identity. However, she feels that even an issue as contentious as this, (even taboo really) can be talked through with her mother:

"There is nothing really that I can, I talk to her about every...say for instance you know the issue, in our culture the issue of *ilobolo*. I don't want that to happen to me. And I, I normally talk, argue with her about that...We laugh about it and why I don't want it to happen so ja, and boyfriends stuff comes out of that, 'cos I know in my culture it is very difficult, I don't know maybe even in other cultures to sit down and talk to parents about such things and the fact that I'm able to" (Palesa).

Palesa acknowledges the fact that she is able to talk with her mother, not just about her everyday life, but they share an open enough relationship that she can negotiate (or at least she feels she can), the terms of *ilobolo*. Like Helen and her daughter AnnMarie, openness in their relationship refers at its limits, to talk around sexuality. It is argued that it is the extent to which these women feel they can negotiate traditionally contentious issues (such as birth control and *ilobolo*) that they experience a level of openness in their mother-daughter relationships. Openness is therefore not a requirement for being able to talk about contentious issues surrounding sexuality, rather defining the relationship as open derives from the extent to which issues around sexuality are discussed. 'Openness' therefore, for daughters refers to the degree to which they feel they can talk to their mothers about sex. Conversely, the mothers in the study choose not to tell their daughters

particular details of their lives as a means to protect daughters from the details of what it means to be a mother or the stresses of adulthood.

4.2.5 Limits to talk: Boundaries

Talking and silences are an attempt by each woman to maintain their role within the mother-daughter relationship. While talk can make each woman seem available and works to characterise this relationship as 'open', silences on the part of both mother and daughter mark out where the boundaries between the pair are.

The participants all showed how silences and talk are two tensions in positioning their mother/daughter as best friend, though they did this differently. Some participants articulated that the *feeling* that they can share with each other is what constitutes the relationship as friendship while also expressing that there were certain things they wanted to keep to themselves. Silences may sometimes be about attempts to protect each other from burden, alternatively silences could also reveal an attempt on behalf of the participant to maintain boundaries and control over their 'own' lives distinct from that of their mother/ daughter. Imposing limits on how much talk and disclosure happens is an attempt to work around and within the dynamics of respect and power. Mothers (and sometimes daughters) in this study felt that limiting talk (and withholding details) could work to protect their daughters or mothers, and therefore functions to protect their relationships as some kind of 'friendship'. Some of the participants in this study choose to withhold in order to protect their mother or daughter from 'worry' or 'burden'.

For one particular participant, her mother withholds the details of what it means to be a woman going through menopause and the experience of having her children move out of home:

“She is just going through all that... menopause so I think it's very lonely for her.

Lara: Does she talk to you about it?

Mmm she pretends like everything is okay, she doesn't really want to burden us. But I know because every time when I have to leave to come to school we fight about nothing and I know it's probably because she doesn't want me to come: like: 'Leave a week later' or you know: 'Do you really have to go now?' And then I know" (Palesa).

Palesa is aware of her mother withholding but they do not talk about what is bothering her mother, or that these 'fight[s] about nothing' are connected to her mother's experiences as a woman. Going through menopause and her children leaving are events that all mothers must eventually negotiate and are developments in Palesa's mother's identity. Female identity is in fact constantly negotiated, indeed liminal as development for identity continues after having children (Billington et al., 1998).

For Nadine, not talking to her children is something she also consciously chooses in relation to particular issues:

"Lara: are you quite open with them?"

No! [Laughs]...At the time they will say Mom what is wrong? And I will say nothing 'cos usually at that stage I can't talk about it, but then at least I know they are open to it... I think a lot of the time when there is problems that you don't, you will just not talk about them, just sort of like keep them inside and hope they go away.

Lara: And when the problems crop up who do you feel bears the weight of it?"

I will. Ja no, I mean I'm very good at doing that you know it all sits on my shoulders most of the time. You know I will try and wipe it off [laughs] but umm you know it usually rests on my shoulders" (Nadine).

Nadine's choice to draw a boundary between her own issues is a conscious choice and functions to maintain the relationship she has with Lyndall in its current shape, as a particular 'friendship'.

Helen maintains a complete silence in relation to her youth or life before her children:

“AnnMarie says I never talk about these things I never talk about these things with the children I mean I never mention my primary school and all that to them. Because I never, I just want to know how they are doing and they want to know how I am doing I’m more or less, mothers want to know more or less how the kids are doing not the other way around” (Helen).

There is a suggestion by Helen that talking and support are indeed skewed and imbalanced. For Helen, mothers want to, and are entitled to, know more about their daughters than daughters about mothers. The wider range of experiences of being a woman often gets lost in the role of being a mother and this is mostly what mothers choose not to tell daughters. The understanding that Helen has of herself as a mother appears to be linked to a particularly fixed notion of identity. This centralised version of identity as locked within a person, awaiting engagement has been strongly challenged by Mkhize (2006) and does much to perpetuate prevalent understandings as linearly constructed.

Further, the relationship shared between mothers and daughters benefits daughters in ways that do not place the situatedness of mothers centrally (de Kanter, 1993). This continues to reproduce the pervasive understanding that mothers’ identities are completed with the final identity crisis of becoming a parent being resolved through having a child of one’s own. Slugoski & Ginsburg (1989) have challenged this view as they argue for an understanding of identity that explores identity from a developmental point of view. In this study it is daughters’ identities that are considered to be emerging identities, identities as ‘work in progress’ and in this way their experiences appear to be central to the interactions that mother and daughter share, their interactions are constructed through the relational interactions they share (Jordan, 1993). Mothers’ identities are considered as reached and attained (Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989), while daughters’ are considered

transitional (Billington et al., 1998). For this reason, the mother's subjectivity as a woman is lost and obscured in this relationship (de Kanter, 1993).

However, it is not only mothers who withhold talk in an attempt to 'protect' the other. AnnMarie (having gone through a family crisis of her own) has felt (like Helen) the need to protect her mother from the stress that she feels the recent family trauma has brought about:

"Lara: Do you, have you always told your mom everything?"

Yes. Umm everything? Some things I don't tell her. Things that might upset her.

Lara: What kinds of things?"

I suppose going through a bad patch in your marriage, I would tend to talk to my sister umm I might not talk to my mom. Something that might worry her... I mean this is a huge source of stress for the whole family and I, I do try to protect her from that...Because she, she has had a hard life you know, she's battled and battled, and uh now I think its time it's a stage in her life now where she should... have a good life.... I don't want her to worry about those things. She has worried enough all the years" (AnnMarie).

In this case AnnMarie is not 'not talking' to anyone because she can still talk to her sister. What is happening however is that she is choosing to shield her mother from some of her more personal thoughts and feelings to prevent her having to worry any more than she feels necessary.

It is possible that there are different dimensions to the act of protection. For the younger women, withholding talk is predominantly about protecting *themselves* and their freedoms whereas for AnnMarie, having her mother live with her and being a mother to her own children means that her withholding has a different dimension:

"I spend a lot of time pretending everything is fine for her sake, which is quite exhausting too. [Laughs] sometimes you just uh, sometimes, I just tend to avoid

her when I'm not feeling great 'cos I don't really want to worry her...she does get very stressed out if she knows that I'm falling apart. Same as my kids, if they know that I'm not having a good day then I see that the kids don't respond well either. So as long as I'm coping fine then everybody can be happy" (AnnMarie).

AnnMarie does not feel that she is mothering her own mother, and she makes it explicit in her interview that her mother lives in her own granny flat on her property and is independent. What is significant however is that AnnMarie does withhold talk from her mother precisely because she feels her mother is at a particular point in her life where she wants to protect her from worry. This does indicate that AnnMarie is positioned differently to the other younger women in this study, as her withholding is less about protecting herself, and more about protecting her mother.

4.2.6 Withholding as Control

The role that mothers and daughters fulfil for each other depends very heavily on how much is revealed in their talk with each other. Mothers and daughters in this study acknowledge the ways in which they choose to withhold in their own mother-daughter relationship. Significant for this analysis are the ways in which some things are just not revealed, for doing so may change the dynamic of the mother-daughter relationship. For some participants withholding disclosure is about demarcating the boundaries that mothers cannot step: daughters asserting control over private details of their lives.

For example, for Prue, exercising control and omitting some details in her talk to her mother works to maintain the relationship that they have in many ways:

“My relationship with my mom is quite close. I can tell my mom most things just some things that she wouldn't like I like leave out” (Prue).

For this particular participant, not talking (or rather silences around what she feels her mother would not like) ensure that she is able to maintain particular kinds of freedoms, and ironically secure her mother's trust. Additionally, Prue acknowledges that details

withheld from her mother assist her in controlling how much her mother knows. What is not said and what participants choose to reveal to each other shapes and informs the boundaries that demarcate the roles that mother and daughter fulfil for each other. For one particular participant there is a definite sense of withholding what she speaks to her mom about. Lyndall exercises direct control over the details of her life:

“Even though she is my best friend in the sense I can talk to her ... she is not just telling me how things should be...she is still my mother in the sense that... there are still things I wouldn't talk to her about like I talk to my friends about...or at least the way that I can talk about certain things is still different from my best friend...and I think the way she would talk to me about certain things are definitely different from the way she would talk her sister or somebody else about it. So in a sense she is like my best friend because we have a good relationship, but she is still my mom, she is still the carer, the nurturer, she is still somebody that will kind of look after me you know in that sense of the word” (Lyndall).

For Lyndall, her mother needs to remain her mother, ‘her nurturer’. To maintain this role she needs to separate out what she tells her mother from what she tells her best friend as for her these roles are in fact different. There is a definite sense of ‘naturalness’ to the category ‘mother’ as Nadine must remain a ‘nurturer’ and the only way here for Lyndall to maintain this distinction is to maintain the boundary between what is said and what is not said. Even though her mother’s role is explicitly likened to that of ‘best friend’, this friendship is different from other friendships and her mother needs to retain the particularly mothering qualities of ‘nurturer’/ ‘carer’.

Similarly to Lyndall, Olive suggests that there are particular things that she also would not consider talking to her mother about:

“She knows I’m on the pill and everything like that and we go get it together, and but like I would never sit there, I’m not like some of my friends who I know you

know like you have got to have a balance, and some of my friends will sit there and talk about like sex tips with their mother and things like that and somehow I think you know that is just just beyond, beyond what I would consider” (Olive).

Olive cannot conceive of talking to her mother about sex tips, and perhaps like Lyndall, she maintains a clear boundary between her mother’s role as carer and friend.

As much as talking and disclosure may work to elevate and maintain levels of intimacy between mother and daughter, each of the women in these mother-daughter relationships also *withhold* talk as a means to secure particular levels of intimacy. When daughters like Lyndall prefer to omit the details of their personal lives they are ensuring that in their understanding their mothers continue to be their best friend.

There is a fine line between control and intimacy for the women in this study and daughters in particular make active decisions to exercise control over this. The line that divides control and intimacy is not easily defined and depends quite heavily on the level of disclosure that occurs between mother and daughter. Laleti’s relationship with her mother appears to be characterised by high levels of disclosure and she feels that this level of disclosure should have meant that her mother would trust her more. Disclosing more has not guaranteed intimacy for Laleti, indeed the high levels of disclosure in this particular mother-daughter relationship led to Laleti feeling controlled:

“Somehow some of these things I never discuss with her...I would be scared to go in and say...this is really hurting me

Lara: What do you think would have happened if you had?

I think...it was going to hurt her and destroy our relationship in a way. She would impose more, I think because she would feel she is losing her control over me. And kind of paving in, and me opening up... somehow as open as we were she was so much in control of my life...And I think that I would have broken her heart and broken her trust and broken that even sense of control and power over

me, 'cos she really did feel like she was in control of my life. I felt that quite a lot. But it wasn't an issue I think with me it was not an issue. Because in return I got a lot of incentives in terms of good clothes, in terms of schooling, I would do whatever it was I wanted to do" (Laleti).

Laleti clearly resists her mother's control but chooses not to disclose this to her mother as she felt that she would react with more attempts to control her. Withholding how she felt about her mother's control was an attempt to limit the feeling of being controlled and this actually worked well to maintain the level of intimacy they experienced as mother and daughter. By avoiding a confrontation over the issue of control, Laleti made it possible for the relationship to continue being defined as friendship (despite its obvious limitations). In this way, the tension between intimacy and control characterise the work that disclosure does for this pair. For Laleti, her silences are a means to exert her own control even as she ostensibly submits to her mother's control.

The boundaries that separate what mothers and daughters allow each other to access are different for each participant. In Laleti's case, she felt a lack of control over how much her mother knew about her life. She suggests that even on her mother's death she hands over control of access to her life:

"I went in, they had you know the curtains around her, didn't remove them for a while, I just sat there. And I decided let me just talk to her. Ummm, one thing that I said to her was 'now that you are there, you can now see my life' that is all I said. Closed the curtain, sat there, the people came, they took her" (Laleti).

Typically, healthy identity is considered the identification with and separation from one's mother (Lawler, 2000). What is being implied here is that particular forms of withholding, in particular the control over details in talk, works to maintain distance, indeed autonomy for daughters from mothers (Lawler, 2000; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). When daughters exercise control over what they choose to share with mothers daughters are also engaging in performances that are effectively about regulation (Rose,

1999). Rose has asserted that the act of articulating the details of one's life to others is in fact an act of deindividuation. It would appear that the comments made by these participants support this argument about regulation.

4.2.7 Talk (not talking) as Discipline

Talk and silences are thus clearly linked to issues of control and regulation between mothers and daughters. It is still less acceptable for women to express any form of aggression of hostility (let alone do it openly) than it is for men (Aapola et al., 2005). According to Aapola et al. (2005) talk (and withholding talk) are the acceptable ways in which girls (as friends) can legitimately communicate their indirect aggression. The act of sulking and isolating each other is the primary means through which silence can communicate displeasure and indeed be a mode of discipline for the women in this study.

“We had the kind of relationship where I didn't want her to be displeased so I suppose that in itself worked.... I think we didn't want mom to be upset so that was quite a big deterrent for going against her” (AnnMarie).

It has been argued that typical mother daughter relationships are marked as 'over intense' with mother and daughter represented as fused and that ultimately each must separate for healthy psyche development (Lawler, 2000). Moreover, it has been argued that the sensitive mother uses a particular brand of discipline, however this must not be confused for no discipline at all as one particular participant suggests that her mother uses shouting and emotionally charged means to make her point when angry:

“Lara: How does she let you know she is angry?”

Oh, she shouts. [Laughs]...Ja, Ja but the problem is she can shout from morning to whenever. Whenever she remembers it, it comes up” (Palesa).

Palesa however, does not engage with her mother's shouting in an argument and finds that isolating herself from her mother is a way in which to escape the conflict:

“Sometimes I try to explain, but when she is angry I cant do anything...So I just keep quiet and I will be angry and I will lock myself in my room” (Palesa).

Palesa refuses to engage her mother’s highly charged form of discipline, opting rather to use silences to negotiate the inevitable conflict within her mother’s attempts to discipline her.

Some mothers in this study utilised silence as a means through which to communicate their disappointment and ultimately as a form of discipline:

“What happened was, when that was what my Gran told her to do and when she did my Gran was actually shocked and disappointed and acted very badly about it and sulked for a week and wouldn’t talk to her” (Prue: relating an incident between her mother AnnMarie and her grandmother Helen).

This incident is retold to me by all three women in this family (Prue, AnnMarie, and Helen) and demonstrates that these women regulate one another through withholding talk. This is in line with the argument made by Aapola et al. (2005) that female interactions around conflict and stress are expressed through indirect forms of aggression.

Lyndall suggests that talk and withholding talk can both work to produce particular forms of relating:

“I remember the one night we had a fight...I think it was for about a day...but at the end of the day...I just remember thinking to myself, I’m so tired of this, how am I getting out of this? I’m sitting in my room, she’s up there [motioning to upstairs]...and I just went to go and speak to her about it and...we just give in...we just deal with it tomorrow kind of thing...kind of get over it...Definitely shorter than with my dad, my dad and me can create that gap for much longer period of time” (Lyndall).

For Lyndall, silences separate her and her mother in ways that make conflict less obvious but are definitely the means through which mother and daughter discipline each other.

Withholding talk is in fact the way in which they express their displeasure with each other; each woman using silence to communicate anger while avoiding overt conflict.

Lyndall differentiates the silences with her mother from those she experiences with her father. Again talk (and silences) in the mother-daughter relationship distinguish this relationship not only from other mother-daughter relationships but also from other family members. Lyndall acknowledges that she also experiences silences (as a mode of discipline) with her father but also adds that this is distinctly different from those with her mother.

“...Umm, I remember just kind of leaving it, some things we've never resolved really, and they've kind of gone unsaid. Umm, with my mom it was kind of, like I had to resolve it 'cos I felt like I couldn't carry on my relationship with her if I didn't resolve it, it wouldn't be the same” (Lyndall).

Like the other women in this study, Lyndall expresses the idea that a high level of disclosure through talk works to secure the intimacy of her relationship with her mother: Moreover, Lyndall implies the converse: that this relationship simply cannot go on as 'normal' until talk resumes. However, Lyndall is also suggesting that talk (and silences) is a particularly gendered interaction: silences between mother and daughter differ in the underlying dynamics from silences with fathers.

With Nadine, Lyndall feels that withholding talk is a way in which both mother and daughter can 'get space' and think their positions through:

“Generally I can say my mom will listen...also [she] can get to a point where if she really is upset about something, umm, she kind of needs her own time to get over it, and, and like deal with it in her mind” (Lyndall).

With Lyndall's father, silence is more about a battle of wills, and she suggests that invariably she will have to apologise. The balance of power is more clear-cut in this

particular instant and this is indicated by the way, in which the silence is broken by Lyndall having to make an effort.

“...With my dad, I kind of felt that I needed to just leave it. ‘cos I felt like, I was scared to kind of go and try and bring up the issue again, ‘cos I kind of take back what I said, and I’m kind of thinking: ‘Well why am I the one going to say sorry?’” (Lyndall).

It is important to emphasise that the nature of talk between mothers and daughters is so pivotal that it leads to particular understandings of the role that fathers in these mother-daughter relationships have. All the participants suggested that talk between mothers and daughters differed (remarkably) from talk with fathers. Talk and withholding talk as a means to discipline is only one way in which this difference is obvious. Furthermore, it is argued that precisely because mothers and daughters talk about the things that they do, and in the way that they do, fathers are excluded. Fathers are somewhat absent, not only physically (although in some cases this is so) but also emotionally. It is argued that this apparent ‘absence’ felt by daughters is connected to the nature of talk between mothers and daughters as much as it is connected to the particularly gendered nature of interactions between mother, daughter and father.

4.3 Gendered Relationships

The roles that are available to fathers seem to be contingent on the generated gendered interactions through talk and disclosure between mothers and daughters. The gendered ‘friendship’ between mother and daughter seems to preclude the need for daughters to interact with fathers in the same way. Understanding the role of mothers in the home through a rubric of friendship reinforces existing gendered divides in the home as this provides the *context* in which all mother-daughter bonding happens. The participants in this study suggest that interactions in the home are in fact gendered, and that this is often linked to the prevalent understandings of the roles that fathers have in the home.

Just as there are no pre-cast roles for mothering, there are similarly no such fixed roles of fathering that men simply occupy (Billington et al., 1998). We cannot expect that fathers always will take one particular role, and so the critique that fathers are expected to be a particular kind of father is limited. Instead, the varied ways in which fathers and daughters interact, and how fathers' roles are constituted within this, must be explored. Fathers' roles are often conflated with the categories inscribed in masculinity, particularly those of 'good man' and 'bad man', in a similar way that has happened with mothering (Lawler, 2000). Mkhize (2006) argues that understandings of masculinity are often collapsed into singular definitions of what constitute good fathering. In this analysis, it is argued that arrangements within the home (and outside of it) work to produce particularly fixed versions of what passes for good fathering.

4.3.1 Masculinity

Olive suggests that her home life was a 'normal' home life, and in this analysis, it is suggested that this is about the gendered nature of their particular 'mother' and 'father' roles. The role that Olive's father has at work enables Olive to consider her family life as feeling 'right':

"My dad had a very high powered job and that. He was working a lot, so we didn't spend very much time together so the time we did have and we appreciated and he was very loving you know. And he would buy us presents all the time and...we went on holidays overseas....Family seemed right... my dad was working... and he was out all day and my mom was there, and she would be home in the afternoon. So it was right" (Olive).

It would appear that the critical role for men entails having a job and being able to provide for one's family makes this particular version of family life feel right while simultaneously marginalising those families that fall outside of this particular definition of 'rightness'. This connects with the suggestions that Mkhize (2006) makes about the

lens through which fathering is viewed, that is, being a 'provider' is the normative role for being a good father.

The worth of men in the home is largely determined by Helen's feelings about her partner Nick's ability (or rather lack of) to provide suggests that this has led to her question his value in the home. It is very clear that in Helen's understanding her partner has provided her with very little financial assistance or even much by way of shared life experiences:

"I liked him so much, because he was such a nice guy which he was, but a totally useless provider of any description ...since we have been together he has hardly earned anything"(Helen).

The role for Nick in the home is deeply connected to his ability to be a 'breadwinner' and since his failure to meet this demand; his worth in the home appears to be limited:

"I would have been better off without him coming, I really would have been good enough on my own. Because the house you know, I paid the whole house off by myself. So I managed" (Helen).

Nick's influence in the home is determine by his financial contributions to the running of the home as Helen suggests that she would have been able to cope on her own without Nick.

The need for a father's presence in the home appears to be determined largely by how well he meets the demands placed on him. These 'demands' may in fact be somewhat limited:

"I think fathers should be there...if and *only if* he is a good father...I mean sometimes you think maybe it would be better if maybe the husband or dad wasn't in the house. You know I have heard of so many kids that have come to schools where their moms are still being beaten up when dads in the house, and then I think maybe it would be better without the father. In my situation with us, I'm very lucky, we all enjoy having him around. He's been very good...but I think it's

a stability side that is important...so long as he isn't an abusive or ugly if he is then...he mustn't be there, then I don't think he creates anything in the family at all" (Nadine).

Nadine suggests that a father's presence in the house creates a sense of stability or 'normality'. The family unit is considered complete only with a father in the home although the implicit masculine threat of physical harm in this private space is an acknowledged possibility (Morrell, 2006). The demands placed on fathers are minimal in that they ought not to be threatening or detract from the well-being of the family members; phrased rather negatively rather than in terms of the positive possibilities for participation in relationships. The suggestion being made is that the possibilities for a father are limited to 'good' or 'bad' and that the difference is whether he is abusive or not.

Like Nadine, Helen suggests that her partner's presence in the home was not entirely negative as he never harmed her physically:

"I say okay a lot of it was bad, but a lot of it was not terrible. He did not beat me, he did not get drunk, he was just useless at earning any money" (Helen).

The potential for harm from men (fathers) was re-iterated by Lyndall. When describing her relationship with her father she suggests that it is a good relationship as she has never had to be fearful of him:

"My relationship with my dad is good, you know its, it's not a case of like I'm afraid of him when he comes home form work" (Lyndall)

Understandings of the roles that fathers fill in the home are normative and prescriptive in the similar ways that mothers' roles as they work to perpetuate existing discourses that imply men in the home cannot be trusted; that men are potentially violent and unstable. It is critical that we engage with what these limited understandings suggest about what we consider constitutive of normal masculinity, even when other modes of masculinity do exist.

Understanding fathers' roles along such gendered lines works to reduce the roles available to fathers as other dimensions to being a father are left unexplored. In this understanding, the key requirements for a father are that he does not take away more than he brings to the home, and all he is required to bring appears rather limited. For Nadine the requirements are strength and stability:

“A good father I would probably say is somebody who does get involved with the children, who does, umm, doesn't pull them down, doesn't belittle them, somebody who shows strength for the kids as well, umm, somebody who would give some of their time to the children, [long pauses] umm. I can't think of anything else” (Nadine).

Similar to Nadine, Palesa suggests that the role of the father in the home should be one that centres on presence, although in Palesa's suggestion his role is more in a helping discourse:

“Loving husband, loving family, being able to uh spend some time at home with me and the kids and helping like doing things together. Everything from cooking to whatever” (Palesa, on the kind of husband she one day would like).

The interactions that Olive has with her father are often conflictual and she links this quite explicitly to gender. For her, the conflict she has with her father is because she is a daughter and not a son and his protectiveness of her is read as constrictive and gendered:

My dad and I, we just, we just conflict... my dad is high strung. He gets very anxious about things and again having daughter, having never had sons, he is very protective of us... You know but the way he approaches that protectiveness is sometimes just a bit too aggressive for me. Sometimes it is just a little bit too much in my face” (Olive).

It has been argued that care in the home has been portrayed as given primarily by women as either mothers or caregivers, with fathers often left out of the picture (Khunou, 2006;

Lawler, 2004; Macleod, 2001). Some of the participants did talk about roles that are more expansive for fathers. Laleti in particular suggests that her father, unlike the majority of fathers in her community, spent time with his family and attending to the children's' needs:

“Most of the families had no fathers. It's either the fathers they were abusive so they eventually left. So my father was kind of, a *father...*” (Laleti).

Laleti points out that her father's involvement in her childhood home was so unique that it led to a feeling of being marginal in their community:

“Sometimes we were insulted because sometimes they would say we are, black people who...treat themselves like white people...Because of the fact that we kept together, and we did a lot of things...my father would be there...But all the other children won't have parents around, but my dad would be there. He made sure I had everything” (Laleti).

Dominant ideologies about fathering, specifically the 'uninvolved' or 'absent' father discourses, appear to collide with a newer child-centred discourse for fathers' involvement (Burman, 1994; Morrell, 2006). Some women, like Nadine and Palesa, suggest that the role of fathers in the home should be one of involvement, although the same women also suggest that they currently experience their father/ husband's role as lacking in terms of availability, that fathers/ husbands are indeed absent in the home.

4.3.2 Father and Farther: Where Have All the 'Good Men' Gone?

The role that fathers have in the home is typically poorly delineated by literature concerned with family processes (Macleod, 2001). Dominant ideologies about masculinity overlap with the role that fathers' are understood to have in the home, particularly in a South African context where masculinity is traversed by the effects of patriarchy (Mkhize, 2006; Morrell, 2006). Typical ideologies of male dominance intersect with discourses of fathers' 'emotional defectiveness' or 'absences' (Morrell, 2006).

Fathers' apparent availability or lack thereof proved, in this study, to be central to how daughters understood connection with their fathers. In many cases, descriptions about fathers centred on those of 'unavailability' as fathers are unavailable in a very literal sense as fathers work and they therefore spend a large portion of time away from the family home. Added to this is the suggestion that part of being a good father is maintaining a working income for the family, which can only be sustained by a successful job. Prue outlines this tension but suggests that although her father is not always present, when he was home he was available to her⁵. Her father did not feel absent in the full sense of the word:

“He worked a lot, he wasn't always at home, very often, and he worked a lot. He always took us straight to school and then he came home about 5 o'clock every night and he would go to work on Saturday mornings as well... So he wasn't home a lot but when he was we used to do a lot of stuff together” (Prue).

Prue suggests that like so many of the participants in this study, her father was very rarely at home and that when he was, his public working role continued to define him:

“The things I do remember, and he always used to with his work clothes and being the boss and all that” (Prue)

Her father's influence is still there, but in a way that reproduces the discourse that fathers are not present, although they are still nonetheless dominant even in their absences. This would connect with the proposition by Morrell (2006) that where fathers are experienced as physically present their dominance is felt in ways that is felt as physically dominant, what remains is an absence of emotional descriptions around his role in the home.

Although the participants recognised that a key limitation on their relationships with their fathers was simply the amount of time they were/ were not at home, some women

⁵ The use of past tense here indicates that Prue's father does not live with his family at the moment. He is cared for in a professional nursing home due to illness.

suggested that there is something ‘not right’ with fathers being home a lot. Both Helen and AnnMarie assert that Nick has hardly been around either as a father or as a partner but they seem to see this absence as relatively ‘normal’ and not entirely negative. Instead, Nick has been involved in a number of business deals that neither Helen nor AnnMarie know anything about, and neither have they benefited from income that may have come out of these deals:

“He has been away a lot...You know, off and on... has been all around...He has even been to America. But I have been nowhere. I have been here paying the bills. So ja, I’m not sorry for myself I must tell you, ‘cos I have had fun, lots of fun with my kids and things, and that is all that matters to me” (Helen).

The perceptions of Nick’s inability to provide financial assistance as well as his physical absences have worked to produce a particular interaction between Helen and her daughters.

Nick’s absence in the family home is confirmed by AnnMarie as she maintains that when she thinks on her childhood, she simply does not picture him in her childhood, or rather that when she does reflect on these memories that they are largely of her mother and her sister, the three of them:

“And strangely enough, I mean my sister and I spoke about this too before, we almost can’t remember my step dad, well not my step dad because they never got married, but we can’t remember him in our childhood, somehow. We always just remember my mom” (AnnMarie).

AnnMarie states here most explicitly, what most participants imply, that fathers are generally absent. This ‘absence’ is the counterpoint to the dominance of participants’ relationships with their mothers as ‘best friends’. Daughters do not experience their fathers as available to them in the same way their mothers are. What appears absent from interactions with fathers is a quality of talk that all the participants suggest they share with their mothers. The lack of talk is connected to the work that fathers do, as invariably

fathers spend a large portion of their day away at work. Moreover, the lack of talk is also connected to the difference in demands that daughters place on fathers as daughters' demands on mothers far exceed those placed on fathers i.e. daughters simply do not expect to have intimate and 'open' conversations with their fathers in the same way they would their mothers.

Daughters in this study did not typically think of their fathers as someone they could take their problems to talk about, or at least not in the same way as they do their mothers. In fact, none of the participants in this study suggested ever having done so. What did come through over and over again was the understanding that fathers are just not the ones they prefer to talk with:

"I'm battling now. He wasn't someone we could talk to. Umm... he was very strong. He gave us a great sense of security. Umm... but he wasn't somebody we needed to talk to. Umm... very quietly observed. Probably if we had of asked him he probably would have so many words of wisdom (laughs)" (Nadine, talking about her father).

Here again the prevailing discourse that fathers are typically dominant, but emotionally unapproachable (Morrell, 2006) is reproduced by Nadine. Fathers are understood as lacking an emotional quality that seems inherent in mothers.

Fathers are not considered the first person to talk to and usually the kind of talk that fathers and daughters do engage in is seriously limited to particular kinds of things. This indicates that the content of conversation between these fathers and daughters is typically gendered, revolving around things that men talk best about, e.g. career decisions, advice about money and work:

"I will speak about my career, like career choices, plans for the future, and hopes and like my big ideas.... we don't ever speak about emotional things" (Olive).

Understanding the father-daughter relationship in these terms reinforces already deeply entrenched male/ female dualities pervading social structures (Macleod, 2001).

Another participant suggests that she too has battled to connect with her stepfather, although she accounts for this slightly differently:

“And we didn’t discuss things. Because they are not for discussion, and that is what he says and that’s the way it is...and I suppose that is why...he was out of the loop because he wasn’t an open person ...and the rest of us were quite upfront open people” (AnnMarie).

AnnMarie suggests that her stepfather’s *personality* explains why she feels unable to talk with him. She relates her own close relationship with her mother to a characteristic ‘openness’ that they share. Further AnnMarie suggests that being able to speak to her stepfather was problematic because, unlike her mother, he was simply ‘not open’ or accessible enough. However, daughters indicated that even when fathers are present they have trouble connecting with them on an emotional level. This would suggest that these women perceive their fathers to be ‘closed’ and this openness/ closedness is determined by how open *mothers* appear to their daughters. The interactions between father and daughter appear closed down possibly because of the openness that mother and daughter share. The fathers in this study are not really afforded the same space to negotiate emotional quality in relationships with daughters because often daughters foreclose on the kinds of interactions that are possible with their fathers. For example:

“Lara: Do you talk to your dad, in terms of the way he talks to your mom the arguments you have with your mom, do you voice that to your dad?”

(Long pause)

No, I wouldn't say so, at all. My relationship with my dad, I don't, I mean I can talk to him about things, but I don't feel like he is as easy to communicate with” (Lyndall).

Lyndall considers the difference in communication with her father as based on a quality in his disposition that makes communicating difficult as she feels he is 'not easy' in communication. Although this is an individualised explanation, it seems to be based on a more general gendered view that all men, because they are men, tend to have more disengaged or unemotional personalities. The perceptions that daughters have regarding their fathers' ability to communicate are gendered in a way that underscores the father's own role in the home. Morrell (2006) suggests that although fathers do want to share relationships that are more positive with their children, they are also constrained by the roles available to them. Within these roles, particular forms of masculinity are acceptable and legitimated through practices. One particular aspect of a normalised masculinity is the deference of most emotional connections as male identity (supposedly) seeks disconnection while female identity is healthy in connection (Lawler, 2000).

Further, it would appear that intersecting with the perception of fathers' availability in the home are assumptions around the emotional quality connected to this availability. The women in this study repeatedly suggest that there is a gendered slant to their relating with their fathers. Furthermore, perceptions about fathers' availability rely heavily on the nature of work for men. The quality of time spent at home is weighed up with the availability that appears to come with this time spent at home (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991).

The fact that men work mediates and structures daughters' interactions with their fathers, and wives with husbands. Olive describes how her father's early retirement has changed the relationship she has with him, as well as the relationship her mother has with her husband:

"I think you know what has made it hard, what has put a strain on our...relationship...is when my dad started to work at home and stuff...just having him around all the time put... strain on...our relationship...is when my

dad started to work at home and stuff...My dad was working...he was out all day and my mom was there, and she would be home in the afternoon, so it was right...

It's just, it was different, it was nicer when he was out" (Olive).

Although at this moment Olive's father is at home, with his children, it would appear that his daughter does not need him at home, at least not like Olive would need her mother. Having her father at home has, ironically put a strain on their relationship. Being readily available to children does not necessarily make for a good relationship between father and daughter.

In this analysis, it is suggested that the gendered interactions between fathers and their family are intimately tied to the intimacy shared between mother and daughter. Lyndall articulates this point more finely:

"I have never really had a close relationship with my father. I haven't built that kind of side with him, I don't think that he would know how to react in that kind of a situation, but if I had to go to him and talk to him about a boyfriend problem, I don't know if he would be able to kind of take my emotions, and then, you know...he has to be the strong one...I...don't know if he would actually know how to deal with it emotionally" (Lyndall).

Lyndall suggests that her father is not only unavailable but he is also somehow unable to interpret or handle her emotions. She connects this with his need to be 'the strong one'. Lyndall's account for why this is so suggests that her father's inability to deal with her emotions is linked to a naturalised need to be a particular male, a strong dominant male (Mkhize, 2006). What is perhaps being suggested here is that daughters do not feel the need to develop connections with their fathers in the way that do with their mothers with the two relationships seeming to mutually define each other. If the mother is understood as 'best friend' this seems to inevitably imply the lack of need for close emotional involvement with the father. Conversely, the absence of a 'friendship' relationship with the father serves to reinforce the exclusive nature of the intimacy established with the

mother. Daughters' demands on mothers far exceed expectations and demands placed on fathers, and in this analysis, this is about the degree to which intimacy constitutes the nature of relating.

4.3.3 Nurturing the Natural Bond: Intimacy

The role available to the fathers in these mother-daughter relationships is connected (and intimately so) to the kind of relationships that the mothers and daughters in this study share. It is precisely because the women in this study identify with each other as friends that fathers' roles in daughters' (and mothers') lives are limited. Understanding the mother-daughter relationship as friendship places emphasis on the level of intimacy shared because of the talk and disclosure mothers and daughters engage in. In this analysis, mothers and daughters that identify their relationship as friendship do so primarily because they share a heightened sense of intimacy (when compared to other traditional hypothetical mother-daughter relationships). Sharing such an intimate relationship may work to inevitably exclude fathers in very significant ways that render fathers as absent. AnnMarie suggests that the closeness she shared with her mother and sister was somehow a result of not having her stepfather around much:

“My sister and I say almost the same thing sometimes, and at the same time. Its, I don't know it's the closeness that we had. And maybe it's also because we didn't really have a male figure in our life” (AnnMarie).

'Absent' here refers to more than just a physical absence (although in some cases this is so), but further, refers to fathers excluded from connection in (or even to) this relationship.

Lyndall suggests (although not explicitly) that her relationship with her father has not been pursued, as she does not need to develop a greater intimacy with him as she has her mother to fulfil this role:

“I think it actually would have to change...if something were to happen to my

mom I kind of feel like I would have to develop that relationship with him so that I did have somebody I could be emotionally attached to...But I see that my mom is there now so I have developed that relationship with her instead”

(Lyndall: referring to the difference between the relationship with her mother and stepfather).

For Lyndall, the need to develop an emotional attachment with her stepfather would be contingent on the loss of her relationship with her mother. She seems to imply that developing a deeper connection with her father would somehow inevitably lessen the exclusively intimate quality of her ‘friendship’ with her mother. For now however, she remains connected to her mother, she does not see a reason to attach emotionally to her stepfather as long as she has her mother around.

AnnMarie suggests, similarly to Lyndall, that a connection with her stepfather has sparked a particular amount of jealousy from her mother for AnnMarie’s time.

“With my mom, you are the family unit, you know we are always there to support each other and it was even an unsaid thing and the three of us were always a close unit... he [Nick] was quite a distant person, and quite a difficult person so he was kind of out of the loop. And now, as time’s gone on, he has mellowed, and he has got his grandchildren and so he has come into the fold a bit more... I find my mom resents the fact that he is a little bit closer to us ...If he comes across and he spends quite a bit of time with me, then she will moan...I think there is a little bit of maybe not jealousy, but you know, for your time?” (AnnMarie).

Helen and her daughters have been such a ‘close unit’ partly because of the apparent absences in Nick’s performance as father in the home. When there is a change in this situation and Nick begins to spend more time with his family, specifically his grandchildren and AnnMarie. Helen feels the transition in his role as a stepfather and grandfather impinges on her own role.

Laleti's own particular contextual factors (she does not have a permanent live in partner and her mother has passed away) has meant that the way she has had to relate to her father has changed. Today as an adult mother of two children, her father is, in her account the primary caregiver to her two younger children:

“Dad is continuing doing what he used to do for us. So I'm not part of that, I'm just parenting by being there financially, and being there half-way emotionally. But where there is a parents like for instance, my sons meetings sometimes, I don't even see his book, dad reads the book, knows there is something to be written in the book, he is in a preschool, and there is a meeting, he reminds me there is a meeting. If I can't go, he will always go...Daddy's there so granddad will always be there for the children” (Laleti).

For Laleti, her own role as mother has been secondary to the role her father fulfils for her children. Laleti's suggestion that she is a mother to her children by being there financially and only 'half-way emotionally' indicates that the relationship she shares with her father has shifted. Laleti suggests implies that the relationship between her father and herself has shifted in a particularly gendered way. Indeed, the way she describes her own mothering role is notably resonant with the descriptions that the participants generally offer of 'fathering'! In this analysis, changes in the relationship that daughters share with their mothers necessarily lead to a change in the way father and daughter relate to each other, and in Laleti's account there is further change in how she relates to her own children as she relates to them through her father.

Over and again, in different ways, the participants in this study suggest that the links they share with their fathers are dependent in significant ways on the gendered roles that fathers occupy. The implication is that the relationship between mother and daughter functions in such a gendered way, that it is so intimate that often fathers influence is limited when measured against the influence of mother on daughter (indeed daughter on mother too!):

“...And it was a very nice time because obviously my mom was a teacher...so I had her around a lot, and it was just a nice balance... What has made it hard, what has put a strain on our...relationship...is when my dad started to work at home and stuff... My dad was working...he was out all day and my mom was there...so it was right... It’s just, it was different it was nicer when he was out” (Olive: on feeling the difference between having her father work and having him at home).

Fundamentally, the father-daughter relationship is as it is because interactions with mothers are so intimate, indeed intense; the relationship that daughters have with either their mother or father mutually informs the other. It is important at this point to connect the significance of gendered roles in maintaining the state of the mother-daughter relationship as friendship.

Generally, the roles that fathers enact at home work for the mothers and daughters in this study to continue being ‘best friends’. More specifically the roles that make the interactions between father and daughter as they rely on deeply entrenched understandings of naturalised gender roles. The question posed here is: does having a particular discourse of father dominance and emotional detachment service the mother-daughter relationship as friendship, and can an analysis that explores the naturalised duality created within this facilitate a better understanding of the workings of the mother-daughter relationship?

4.3.4 Public and Private: The Natural Divide

Assumptions about naturalised female/ male dualities are deeply embedded in participants’ understandings of the roles for fathers and mothers at home (Macleod, 2001; Rose, 1999). Gendered assumptions about fathers’ roles in particular produce understandings of where women and men’s roles are ‘naturally’ located. Prue suggests that her father’s illness has meant her mother taking on more of her husband’s tasks:

“Well before she did a lot of what my dad told her to do, she wasn’t very independent she had never really actually lived on her own in her life and she has never had to do stuff for herself. Or do things on her own and now that my dad is gone she has had to cope with a lot of things, look after us on her own, do all the financial things that my dad used to do. She has had to learn a lot about that...she is a lot more independent so that is nice. She is becoming more like my dad” (Prue).

Although Prue recognises her mother’s role at home has had to shift because of the context that AnnMarie finds herself in, Prue suggests that this shift is about becoming more like her father. Precisely because AnnMarie is having to be more independent, take on more financial responsibility and is taking charge of her studies and career, so Prue understands her mother’s role to be more like a father’s role. This can be read as the public/ private divide that Rose (1999) has argued, and this divide appears to be embedded in naturalised assumptions about gender: that masculinity is connected to the public realm and femininity is connected mostly to the private (Macleod, 2001).

Prue was not the only participant who indicated that the roles men and women have are divided along these gendered lines, and in this public/ private arrangement. Palesa suggests that in her own home, her father’s influence felt different to her mother’s, but (significantly) this was about a gendered difference:

“I think just just being a woman and a mother coming back home and trying to take hold of the whole family. You know take care of the family, and ‘cos I guess its natural, men are like even though there are men who are nurturing and you know, but my dad just didn’t have any order of how things should be done. He wasn’t even there like most of the time...I don’t know I think its just, its just her being a woman and part of nurturing” (Palesa: referring to the different way her mother ran the household compared to her father).

Palesa recognises her mother's influence as being nurturant and ordered and this is explained as *natural*. To this end, her father's influence stands in stark contrast to her mother's and works to produce this feeling of 'absence' in her home, even when he was there. Although she does not explicitly compare her mother's and father's roles the implication is that it is her *mother* who is 'more committed', furthermore this commitment takes the shape of nurturance, something that Palesa identifies as part of 'being a woman'. Inevitably, the influence that fathers can have in the home appears to be determined to a large degree not only by how much time he spends there but inevitably by his gender too.

Further to this analysis of an embedded male/female duality are assumptions about what is considered natural within these distinctions. Lyndall has already suggested elsewhere in this analysis that she does not feel her father would be able to handle her emotions, and because of this what she does talk to her father about is limited to 'typically masculine' content:

"Dad has definitely got the dominant role... he's very business you know, in the way he even comes at home, everything is always a negotiation or some kind of business thing... if I had to go to my dad with a problem he would pretty much give me a strategic way on how to deal with it you know. And I could take that or I could leave it... I can have intellectual conversations with him and he has kind of gained respect for me, which I didn't have obviously when I was 15" (Lyndall).

In developmental psychology literature, the influence of fathers in the home is limited to the realm of the public, as argued by Macleod (2001). In this study, mothers and daughters reproduce this understanding. For example, Lyndall considers her father's influence as typical of how he would engage at work (the typically public realm of masculinity). Lyndall suggests that the conversations she has with her father typically centre on intellectual and strategic ideas, what Venn (1998) may argue to be the values of

science and reason. To this end, fathers are the source of rationality and insights into public life, in ways that mothers just are not.

Reducing interactions with fathers in this way is limiting for not only fathers but mothers too. The reproduction of gender in this naturalised form begs the following question: are mothers not equipped to deal with their daughters' need for rationality, for their cognitive demands, or career choices in the same way fathers are? The answer certainly seems to be that daughters position their mothers as lacking in these ways. Fathers' influence is only sought out in relation to these (public) matters while mothers are charged with ruling the home (private). Occasionally fathers' roles may extend to the private, although this is mostly to offer guidance that is about 'public matters' anyway (Macleod, 2001).

Women (as mothers) care for children in the home (private) in ways that 'only women can', similarly, fathers can only provide care meaningfully in ways that are related to 'public' and this is mostly (though not limited to) the role of 'provider'. What begins to emerge from these assumptions is the understanding that conceptualising the mother daughter relationship as friendship is a construction that has, as a side effect, the reinforcement of a gendered split in parenting.

Reinforcing the genderedness in relationships at home works to produce understandings that participants have not only of their own parents, but also of the kinds of parents they in turn will one day become. Olive has very clear objections to the shift in her father's working life, and suggests that this shift is linked quite strongly to her understanding of her father's masculinity:

"If he was doing an 8-5 or 8-8 job...It would have been much better...At the moment its like a bit of animosity 'cos like I respect my mom a lot 'cos you know she works, she is running a household and then everything like that....It's not the same as when he was working 8-5...My dad isn't doesn't have a job at the

moment ...But it's just, it was different. It was nicer when he was out. And it was better for him, like I think he feels frustrated, like being *emasculated*, being like the man the *housewife*, even though he is doing work, but like its not the same as when he was heading up this big company. So I think it's very frustrating for him and it's very frustrating for us. I would rather he went out and did his thing” (Olive).

Olive's understanding is a powerful one for it captures many of the naturalised assumptions of how men who work at home are positioned, and for how masculinity is shaped within this. For Olive, there appears to be one overriding version of her father's masculinity. The fact that her father works from home and not *outside* the home works to negate the masculinity she understands her father to have. Conversely, Olive reproduces the entrenched understanding that work that happens within the home is typically feminine and often emasculated, without its own power (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

For Olive, it would appear that the nature of the categories 'man' and 'woman' are naturally inscribed, and the roles that are constructed out of this remain locked in their male/female duality:

“I just think I don't know I just think its better. Men still need to feel like men, and women need to feel like women” (Olive).

The assumptions that Olive, and the other women in this study have about male and female roles are more or less entrenched in naturalised dimensions of gender. This has implications for the mothering role that some of the women envision taking as mothers in the future.

4.3.5 A Future for 'Mother - Love'? Reconceptualising Women's Roles As Mothers

The choices that women face today are perhaps more varied and possibly more empowering than may have been the case for the mothers in this study. Entry into the

labour force seems more likely, and is possible at higher levels than has previously been the case (Aapola et al., 2005). For the women in this study their own mothering role for the future is acknowledged as connected to these other choices about career and partnerships.

Palesa in particular suggests that her choice of a career will have to come second to her choice to be a mother:

“I know it seems to be a common thing these days but kind of like focus on my career and of course when I become a mom just to back off a little bit and bring up my children, even if it’s for 5 years or so. Just be a stay at home mom or something part time... I just want to be so involved in their lives and be there from 8-4” (Palesa).

The choice to be a professional intersects with women’s choice to be a mother as the responsibility of childcare, and childbearing remains primarily women’s responsibility. For these reasons, these young women feel that they have to strategise the balance between having a child and having a career. Olive suggests that the choices she will one day face are based on what is natural for women to do:

“It sounds more traditional and that but I would like a working man 8-5 because you just... you need to both be working, you need to have a good income, you need to be comfortable... like this figure that goes to work and looks after his kids and is a provider...I still think the mother should I don’t, her career, I cant explain, but her career should make allowances for the children more so than the dad” (Olive).

There are two levels at which Olive is pitching her understanding of what roles fathers and mothers have. Olive suggests that for her having a man work is part of the **normal** story that goes with having children, while also suggesting that being a woman implies that her career would take a ‘back-seat’ to care for children. Further to this, Olive

suggests that should her husband not spend a significant portion of his time in the family home, she could respect that:

“If my husband has to work long hours then I will respect him for that ‘cos then it’s for the family, so. That is what I will like. A husband that is ambitious”
(Olive).

Here assumptions about masculinity and the role of ‘the provider’ traverse Olive’s choice as a woman to remain more oriented towards motherhood. Indeed choices for men and women are rooted, at least in Olive’s understanding in typical gendered roles for fathers and mothers.

Emerging from what Olive and Palesa are both implying are discourses that are rooted in attachment theory: that mothers give the best care for children and furthermore that fathers are not necessary attachments in the healthy development of children. Olive suggests that her husband should work longer hours if it is in the best financial interests of the family, which reproduces the public/ private divide. Moreover, that it is a given that women place childcare above working is an indication of child-centred pedagogy so typical of the sensitive mother (Lawler, 2000; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Being a mother and being a woman are layered in complex ways. There are of course also competing discourses of women’s rights and emancipation from the kitchen in circulation that have always been familiar to the mothers in this study and these intersect with other discourses about mother-love (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). There are different layers to how identity is experienced and articulated and the women in this study were no exception. However, it seems evident that the particular quality of the relationship that these women share with their own mothers serves to reinforce and perpetuate traditional gendered roles. Ironically the strength of the ‘friendship’ they share with their mothers (and hence a sense of admiration for these women) seems linked to the relatively traditional role that their mothers (and fathers) play:

“I would want to be more involved and its not like a chore, like oh umm you know being a mom like I just want to be a business woman and my husband must start picking up the slack, I mean its not like it, it’s a pleasure, it’s a *love* to look after your kids” (Olive).

The women in this study are actively choosing, constructing, and performing their own particular positionings within the mothering discourses. For the most part these choices are linked to contextual factors that mediate these choices. While Olive and Palesa’s choices could be considered choices that are more ‘traditional’ in a mothering role, they are actively negotiating what that means for their own femininity within this. For Laleti becoming a mother has meant a shift in her other roles, such as those roles connected to work and career:

“I was, I was still going to finish my degree, do my honours, because I wanted to be a psychologist, and there is no way that I’m going to be a psychologist if I’m going to be a psychologist, if I’m going to marry this rural man and be a wife ... I’m not going to spend my time, and be like all these women here, I might still have a life” (Laleti).

Laleti here explicitly reconceptualises the possibilities for a relationship that would take her role as a working woman into account and actively resists the stereotypical gendered tradition. One of the crucial markers of difference between mother and daughters in this study proved to be education, and this makes it possible for daughters to do what mothers have not traditionally been able to do, challenge pervasive forms of gender roles, in the way that Laleti does.

Daughters in this study experience their education as empowering, indeed liberating from the confines of what they understand to be typical roles for women:

“My mom, she is a housewife...and very very I would say uneducated...

Lara: How do you think you are different?

The first thing that I'm thinking about and I'm trying to push it away is the level of education. Ja. And also I have been thinking now her being at home, 'cos I thought there is so much that she can do with her life instead of just living for us" (Palesa).

While education is a contextual factor that differentiates mothers from daughters in a particular way, it affords the daughters in this study the possibility to consider their mothers as their equal. Indeed, it is suggested that having an education that far exceeds their mothers can work to produce this form of relating. Perhaps these educational shifts (and the implied prospects for future working roles and socioeconomic independence) serve to negate the unequal power that usually is vested in the mother.

For Lyndall, her education (framed as her 'knowledge') affords her a particular level of credibility with her mother. Her knowledge contributes to her understanding this relationship as equal:

"I know more about certain things than she does and similarly she knows more about certain things...More equal is probably the best way to describe it...I mean I did talk to her, but I don't think that I had the knowledge to help her as much, whereas I think now I can maybe facilitate the process of making a decision a bit better than I did then" (Lyndall).

Girls' education affords daughters a positioning within the mother/ daughter relationship that offers them credibility, believability as what could be termed a 'co-parent' for her mother as she feels her mother needs her help in some areas. Lyndall makes this quite explicit, that she 'helps' her mom in ways that relate specifically to her mother's discipline decisions for her siblings:

"I kind of negotiate sometimes for my sister. If I feel personally that it's ok for her to go [out]... my relationship with my mom is such that my mom values my opinion...kind of take it into consideration..." (Lyndall).

The prevalence of this rubric of equality is pivotal for how it is that daughters can challenge their mothers' authority. Furthermore, education and the possibilities afforded by it make the traditional forms of parent and child unstable. In this context the ways in which each woman in the mother-daughter relationship relates to the other must operate under the rubric of equality. This necessarily connects to regulation, as overt regulation in the context of friendship is not possible.

4.4 'Good Girls'/ Nice Girls: Self-Regulation

"The mother must manage her self, and teach the daughter to engage in practices of managing *her* self- to regulate *herself*.....the absence of *overt* control is read as not control at all, but as the mother's sensitive facilitating of the child's 'true self'...this 'true self' is held to be intrinsically 'autonomous'. Self-regulation is normalised as the 'right' form of regulation, or indeed as autonomy- the lack of regulation. In this way, the self's relationship *to* itself- and the regulation inherent in this- becomes obscured" (Lawler, 2000, p. 82).

It has been argued that mothers' roles are regulated and monitored by particular social processes (Lawler, 2000; Macleod, 2001; Rose, 1999; Walkerdine & Lucey 1989). These social processes work to produce particular versions of mothering that are acceptable and unacceptable, versions that are often reproduced by the consumption of these roles as they are accepted as 'expert knowledge' (Burman, 1994). Conceptualising mothering along a continuum of 'good' and 'bad' is problematic and an analysis of 'good mothering' reveals that women are today still subject to forms of regulation. Particular contemporary versions of what constitutes a 'good mother' are no less regulating than previous ideologies surrounding motherhood, the kind that kept women at home, in nurseries and out of the workplace (Burman, 1994). This analysis is concerned with exploring how modes of regulation constitute the performance of being a good mother and being a good daughter, indeed how they constitute women as 'good girls'.

4.4.1 My Mother, My Best Friend: Not Just Any Other Mother!

The women in this study articulate clearly that they have actively chosen to be particular kinds of mothers/ daughters for reasons that work for them and they conceive of themselves as 'good mothers'/ 'good daughters'. They express active agency in the way in which they choose to negotiate this relationship against the more rigidly structured regulatory relationships of 'best friends' and the stereotypical female roles of previous generations. However, closer analysis reveals that the relationship is highly regulatory of both mothers' and daughters' roles.

Regulation should not be understood as a purely negative process. These participants consider their mothers different from other mothers in definite positive kinds of ways. Regulatory practices for these women are different to other mother-daughter practices specifically in the ways that dealing with conflict appears to work less painfully and less overtly. The interactions that they share appear less conflicted and feel 'easier' when compared to other possible mother-daughter relationships. AnnMarie describes her relationship with her mother as symbiotic and intuitive:

"...I got...to understand her more as a person rather than as a mother...She would come and stay with me and again, we would cook together, and again we would have that same kind of interaction we had when I was younger. Where we would work as a team and she would take the baby if the baby was crying and let me sleep...I always felt like I could ask, I didn't even have to ask actually. My mother always knew what I needed, and she would just be there and just take it... I suppose in that way, when you have a newborn baby and you have a mother that is almost like your second hand, she is just there and she knows what to do...She just fills in and it's like an extension of yourself" (AnnMarie: on having her mother's help as a new mother herself).

AnnMarie describes her mother's help as an 'extension' of herself. AnnMarie implies that her own transition into mothering was easier for having her mother around. What is important for this analysis are the levels of intimacy made possible by forms of self-regulation. A growing sense of equality seems inevitable when mother and daughter are not involved in a traditional 'mother as authority' form of relating.

These mother-daughter relationships are not conflict-free but being able to reason and negotiate with each other works to produce interactions that make this *feel* like a relationship between 'equals':

"It was actually quite a democratic life that we had...it was always a case of you know, the three of us deciding how we would go forward...We used to do housework together, we used to cook together. We used to do those things as a team. Rather than as her saying: You can actually help me with this and this and this. We used to work as a team" (AnnMarie).

Interaction through negotiating appears as teamwork and these interactions make negotiating conflicts possible.

Having a mother as a best friend makes it possible to think that certain things are negotiable. Being able to negotiate credibility and a sense of responsibility is possible because mother and daughter share a particularly intimate bond with each other. Lyndall for example, suggests that she was able to 'reason' with her mother about a weight management programme, and because of her relationship with her mother she is able to negotiate this decision:

"...There have been certain things that I felt I wasn't comfortable to talk about. Like when I was younger, I wanted to lose weight and I felt... I couldn't talk to her about it 'cos she felt...I was too young to be worried about that kind of thing...That's gonna be a case of 'oh okay, you've got an eating disorder'...Now being at a level where I can talk to her... I can reason with her about it, and she

kind of gives me the credit that maybe I've got enough experience to be able to... go on a weight programme... and not go off the rails and... show up with an eating disorder" (Lyndall).

The particularly intimate interactions shared between this mother and daughter means that Lyndall feels that her mother recognises her as reasonable and responsible. This understanding links particularly well to the arguments asserted by Rose (1999) in relation to the ways that subjectivity can be monitored by others as well as the selves. One particular 'technology of subjectivity' (Rose, 1999) would appear to be the reasonability and responsibility displayed by Lyndall (Venn, 1998). Because Lyndall self-monitors Nadine does not have to explicitly regulate her and it can therefore be argued that reason becomes the hallmark of autonomy (Venn, 1998; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

This matter of reason and negotiation is reflected in several descriptions of interactions between mother and daughter and seems central to defining the relationship as one of mutual equality and respect:

"...she would say: "I'm unhappy with what you have done and these are the reasons". She was always one to give you the reasons... She wasn't a very lenient mom in that way...she was strict about going out...she was always open whatever, boundaries she put in place. She would give us the reasons for that. She would never just say because I said so" (AnnMarie).

Like AnnMarie, Lyndall also describes being able to negotiate with her mother. Negotiation seems possible as her mother provides the reasons for her decisions. Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) have argued that the sensitive mother always provides the reason for whatever limits she places on her children. Mother and child/ daughter can rationalise conflict and turn possible conflicts into lessons:

"...it was a case of, she didn't just turn around and say 'cos I said so'... To me that wouldn't have made sense and I wouldn't, I ...would have probably rebelled against that...She definitely did...talk to me about the limitations and explain the

reasons why which also made me understand her reasoning for it, which also facilitated our relationship 'cos it wasn't such a dictatorship" (Lyndall).

4.4.2 'Good Girls': Mothers' Reason and Regulation

Knowledge about families, and in particular mothers, produces particular versions of mothering against which mothers can measure themselves. This ensures that particular subjectivities can be monitored and regulated. Particular versions of mothering that do not measure up to the current version of a 'good mother' are labelled problematic and these women are considered 'bad mothers' (Lawler, 2004; Macleod, 2001). In this analysis, being a 'good mother' is work and it entails fulfilling children's needs over one's own:

"You got to push aside all those things that you basically wanted to do. There will come a time again when I might be able to, when I might be like "wow I have got so much time, I hate this!" (Nadine).

The activities located within the work of being a mother are transformed and concealed in the home (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). The work of women as mothers is to be 'good girls'. Being a 'good girl' means being a good mother as well as raising a 'good girl' for a daughter. 'Good girls' are those female subjectivities that do not pose any threat or danger to social order. These women ensure that their children become 'good citizens' (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

It is understood that women spend more time with children than fathers do, and the responsibility for the transmission of what is 'good' and 'right' therefore appears to rest almost entirely in women's hands. The roles that women have at home as mother/daughter are connected to social forms of regulation and this regulation works to produce particular interactions between mother and daughter. The positioning of mother and daughter as 'friend' means certain rules of interaction are necessary although concealed in the apparent absence of rules. Mothers and daughters ought to be 'good

girls'. 'Good girls' are those women who, as mothers, do not pose any threat to society as 'bad mothers' do in raising 'bad daughters'. Furthermore, practices of being a 'good girl' remain embedded in representations of what constitutes a 'good mother'. AnnMarie suggests just this point:

"I suppose it's the same like with me and my mom, if they don't want you to be upset, that is probably the biggest power that you have got over them because you don't have to enforce discipline or anything. They want to please you, and maybe that is the secret in keeping your kids on the straight and narrow" (AnnMarie).

AnnMarie is suggesting that discipline and emotion such as displeasure work together to coax daughters to do what mothers want them to do. At the same time, daughters consider themselves as acting freely and this is the illusion of autonomy as argued by Walkerdine & Lucey (1989). This illusion works to ensure that neither mother nor daughter have to make their hostility or conflict apparent. In this way, mother and daughter each can become 'good girls'.

Daughters can become 'good girls' by being particular kinds of daughters, they must be obedient and compliant. Connected to the performance of being a 'good girl' is the particular intimate and democratic interaction that these women share. When choosing to define the relationship as friendship, particular self-monitoring between mother and daughter become part of the interactions these women share.

Both mothers and daughters must be 'good girls'. Mothers are good girls as they teach (though perhaps not explicitly) their children to self regulate, whilst self-regulating at the same time (to be the 'good-enough mother'). Daughters are good girls when they self regulate and show themselves to be responsible, rational, and democratic citizens:

"...they should facilitate your role as human being ... they must understand that you are your own person and they must facilitate ...their child's development... not just dictate their development... instead of kind of lead you and say this is

how you should be living your life, they should also allow the person, 'cos at the end of the day their children are gonna be their own individuals, and kind of allow them to explore and develop by themselves yet guiding them in the process" (Lyndall: on the role of mothers).

The mother being described here by Lyndall is the typical 'sensitive mother' as argued by Walkerdine & Lucey (1989). This mother does not dictate, she employs a facilitatory rather than dictatory role and she allows her children to explore and develop their own identities. However, the gaze of a regulatory social system including various social structures (religion, 'culture', traditions) monitors both women as mother and daughter and the 'good mother' has a particular role (Lawler, 2000). Her role is similar to that of identity 'tour guide' as she only points her children in the right direction! The daughter's role is to develop into an autonomous, independent, and self-regulating woman who one day will become a mother too.

In this analysis, mothers and daughters work together to be 'good girls'. Women who are 'good mothers' are those women who allow space for their children's development. This representation of mothering is on one hand similar to the 'good-enough mother' as described by Winnicott (1964, in Lawler, 2000) where the mother is supposed to be responsive to a child's needs but never too much to stifle the child's emerging autonomy. On the other hand, this is also a relatively new development in thinking about what constitutes a 'good mother'. In this newer understanding, child-centred discourses are traversed by a complimentary discourse of mothers remaining non-impositional or taking a 'hands-off' approach to child rearing. The kind of mother that Lyndall is describing is a relatively new (and culturally specific) understanding of what constitutes a 'good mother'. These shifts in understandings of what makes a 'good mother' can be seen in this study on two levels.

First, many of the participants in this study connected assumptions about 'good mothering' with women's ability to foster warm and intimate relationships with their children while simultaneously remaining 'non-imposing'. The 'good mother' is a *friend* to her children:

"Friendship as in...she has never been a mother who has told me what to do. It has always been a case of friendship rather than one person commanding another"
(AnnMarie).

Significantly, AnnMarie interprets her mother's role as friend because she has never felt her mother 'commanding' her and her mother is an identity co-constructor, not an authoritarian force. Indeed, Helen does not exercise authority over AnnMarie in explicit ways. This is perhaps a distinctive feature of the 'good mother' as not overtly imposing power or authority.

Second, many of the participants connect 'good mothering' with attempts by mothers to be a *different* kind of mother (different both to other mothers as well as different to one's own mother):

"...we didn't really sit and talk when I was young with my mom and I have tried to change that and just made time where we can sit together and talk... maybe we did sit and talk but not in the sense that I remember it like with my children"
(Nadine).

The mothers in this study implied that their particular role was an attempt to avoid becoming like their own mothers; they want to 'do it differently' to their mothers. This represents a shift in generational understandings of what constitutes a "good mother":

"I don't think she saw me as authoritarian. I never ever, I'm not that kind of person. I think I'm totally opposite to how my mom was" (Nadine).

Ironically, while these women see their role in relation to their daughters as pivotal for their daughters' futures, they do not see themselves as dependent on learning from their own mothers. In fact they suggest that 'learning' to be a mother was not even possible:

“...I think everything... these sorts of roles nobody can put it on paper and say it should be like that...When it comes to that little individual its different [Laughs]...What theoretically works with that one isn't necessarily going to work with the next one” (Nadine: on what she has had to learn about being a mother).

In this analysis it is suggested that the circulating rubric of friendship works well to ensure that the traditional role of mother (as authoritative) is destabilised. Daughters no longer have to simply prepare themselves for a future of mothering (as an end point in development) (Aapola et al., 2005; Billington et al., 1998), that is they are not merely following the same trajectory of development that their mothers have done. This is linked to the possibilities afforded to younger women by developments in education and the career trajectories this opens up for them. What this appears to imply is that neither women are involved in a hierarchical relationship of authority with the other, and so mothers are less certain about demonstrating overt regulation and daughters more likely to assert their own:

“You are there for each other... Not really expecting what the other should be... It's more just a case of how we interact with each other. Which is pretty much on an equal basis, we kind of give equally to the relationship. Not just her kind of feeding instruction onto me, and then me either doing it or not and being a delinquent, more us kind of just interacting together” (Lyndall).

Lyndall suggests that equality is made possible by how they each ‘give equally to the relationship’. For Lyndall, this is about not having to fulfil a traditional role of daughter whereby her mother’s instructions are imposed on her and her having to follow whatever those instructions may be. The interaction that Lyndall suggests is possible precisely because she considers herself *included* in the interactions less as her mother’s daughter and more as her mother's *equal*. In this understanding the traditional role of mothers has been destabilised and works to produce new forms of regulation for both mother and daughter (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

The participants positioning of each other as 'friend' also suggests a particular shift from prevailing representations of the mother as caregiver. For Prue, in particular, being able to talk to her mother about particular things changes the role she sees her mom fulfilling in comparison with the more limited caregiver role of the mothers of her other friends:

“...umm they don't always talk to their mothers, like if something happens to them they don't, their mothers aren't really in with their lives. They just there to look after them and take them places and all that. And when I tell them about my mom they are very surprised 'cos they don't tell their moms those kinds of things” (Prue).

Prue's mother is not just there as a caregiver and 'to look after' her because (unlike other mothers) AnnMarie is *involved* in Prue's life. This involvement includes the friend-like interactions as laid out by the nature of talk between the pair. The role AnnMarie has in Prue's life is different to other mothers' roles in that she talks with her daughter. The relationship that Prue and AnnMarie share is also helped along by the fact that AnnMarie's own mothering role is one that is not imposing:

“You must know what is going on, you must get told...I think she really understands and has kind of internalised that, not just a thing of I'm imposing on her” (AnnMarie).

This 'non-imposing' positioning of AnnMarie here has also led to Prue's understanding there to be less of a distinction between AnnMarie's mothering role and her friend-like role.

The role that mother and daughter fulfil for each other is mediated by both the social conditions in which the relationship is located as well as the other roles and relationships in which the women participate. Prue suggests that her mother is her best friend because she is not a 'typical mother', indeed the equality she experiences with her mother makes her mother feel like her sister:

“And I see my mom almost as one of my friends, like at my age level. Because of, especially with her going to varsity and my dad not being there, its almost like, more like a sister kind of, although not completely” (Prue).

For Prue, her mother’s status as a student makes it possible for her to think of her as similar to her, and so paradoxically in being an atypical mother, she becomes a typical friend:

“I can relate a lot more to her, its more kind of a relationship now, before it was more her caring for me and looking after me, and now its more friends and I look to her for support a lot” (Prue).

Prue suggests that the relationship can be conceptualised as friendship because of the roles that the mother plays both in relation to her daughter and outside of this relationship. For the women in this study, constructing their mother as their best friend challenges her authority as a mother to instruct or discipline her as a daughter and makes it necessary to engage in less overt forms of regulation.

Furthermore, regulation is not only about mothers and daughters regulating each other’s behaviour, but also regulating their own behaviour. Mothers have a fear of becoming the kind of mother who ‘imposes’, interferes in or obstructs their children’s own development. In many ways, this fear regulates the mothering role a woman constructs for herself. When daughters perceive their mothers to be controlling or imposing this produces conflict:

“I tend to be so rebellious and push her away all the time... We were staying with my dad we used to do things in our own time, you know, watch T.V all night, wake up very late, not make your bed, and my mom was like very strict and she wanted us to do things at a certain time. So I used to have a problem with that ‘cos I didn’t want the schedule” (Palesa).

Palesa resisted her mother’s attempts to control her time; indeed she suggests this resulted in her pushing her mother away all the time. The level of intimacy in this

relationship depends on the particular mothering style that women choose with their daughters as mothers opt for a style that is not controlling in particular ways.

4.4.3 ‘Good Girls’: Daughters, Discipline, and Regulation

It has been argued that the task of the ‘good mother’ is to produce children who are democratic citizens (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Furthermore, these good citizens must embody many of the (typically Euro-American) values of this democracy, i.e. independence, autonomy, and rationality. Within the task of raising these citizens, mothers must neither hinder nor obstruct daughters’ development as daughters mature. Within this analysis, I argue that the development of autonomy in daughters can be read as daughters learning to self-regulate.

Self-regulation depends as much on mothers’ roles as ‘good girls’ as it does on the extent to which daughters are ‘good girls’. For daughters in this study, being a ‘good girl’ is about being compliant and obedient:

“She was very strict with me, and I think I was an obedient child. I was a very *easy* child. In terms of discipline, in terms of listening” (Laleti).

For Laleti, being a ‘good girl’ is directly equated with obedience and listening and this meant that her mother did not have to make her discipline explicit and painful. This connects well with Aapola et al’s. (2005) argument that girl's friendship are characterised by compliance. The daughters in this study express their compliance explicitly and this works well to enable women to define their relationship with their mothers as friendship.

Similarly, Nadine suggests that the way in which discipline has worked in their home has relied on the extent to which Lyndall was the kind of daughter that never needed to be told what to do, that is Lyndall was, like Laleti a compliant child:

“She [Lyndall]...disciplines herself, basically. Where a lot of children need to be told to go and do it, I’ve never had to with her. She has always managed her time.

Been able to sit down, work, and do it. Without having to be yelled at, screamed at and told what to do... There wasn't a stage where I had to say 'you will do this' or 'you won't do that'... You know that is how it is...we don't have to beat you up to abide by the rules. You know what I mean? We haven't had that sort of situation where you would want to use corporal punishment on the kids. And the kids have just sort of learnt by it" (Nadine).

Being a 'good girl' for both mother and daughter depends on both roles being co-constructed- mothers can be nondirective *because* daughters are compliant but conversely, daughters are compliant because mothers are nondirective. This would suggest a connection to Jordan's (1993) argument that a relational understanding of identity is about more than influence and connection. Instead, within this relational understanding it is possible to explore how each women's role is part of and constituted by the other's role; indeed each woman is *part of* the other (Fay, 1996). Having daughters like Laleti who are obedient; daughters who, like Lyndall discipline themselves and AnnMarie who do not want to displease their mother, makes it possible for these mothers and daughters to share interactions that look and feel *like friendship*. Self-regulation, and regulation of *each other* makes it possible to form intimate interactions based on reason and negotiation (each a form of regulation).

Discipline thus works in ways that are typical of the sensitive mother and democratic home. In the democratic home, discipline is internalised and enables daughters to feel free to make decisions for themselves. For Lyndall's mother, children are able to 'discipline themselves' and afforded the credit of being responsible enough to do so. This mode of discipline has enabled Lyndall to access particular freedoms:

"I remember most of my life being very free to do what I want, although with that came the fact that I gained their respect that I had become a responsible

person...and nowadays I can pretty much do what I want my parents pretty much know that I will be responsible” (Lyndall).

Lyndall has internalised her mother’s regulation and discipline works through her ability to self-regulate. However there is a trade-off being made here: in return for Nadine continuing to allow Lyndall to ‘discipline herself’, Lyndall should continue to be a ‘good girl’ so that she does not compromise the credibility that is given to her. In this way Nadine does not have to dictate to Lyndall, Nadine can continue to be the kind of mother she is so long as Lyndall is a ‘good girl’.

Not all mothers can avoid laying explicit boundaries for their daughters. For AnnMarie, having a young daughter means that she does need to have some clear lines between her role as mother and Prue’s role as daughter. This means that for AnnMarie, being a ‘good mother’ can prove difficult for the resistances this provokes from her daughter. Being a particular ‘sensitive mother’ means that she finds setting boundaries for her daughter difficult and that she must actively reason and negotiate with her daughter about the limits and rigidity of rules in the home. AnnMarie connects this difficulty with the pressure she feels when exposed to the choices that other parents have made for their daughters:

“I’m finding that a bit difficult, because I see her friends are getting *carte blanche* to do what they want and I don’t think it’s a good thing umm and it is always a difficult thing for me to say to her, and I do, to say I don’t care if your friends do that, I think that you should do this. But she pushes always. Pushes, pushes” (AnnMarie).

AnnMarie has chosen not to let Prue have ‘*carte blanche*’ and this means that even though she considers her relationship with Prue to be like friendship, there is still difficulty in setting boundaries. Even though both mother and daughter in this relationship consider each other to be ‘like friends’ there are still struggles for, and

resistances to, power. Prue resists her mother's attempt to lay down consistent rules (these include things like a reasonable bedtime and cell phone usage):

"It seems to be that I'm not consistent...and I don't quite know where...to set these boundaries. And it's difficult too, 'cos in some ways I think it's okay 'cos if she is getting good marks at school does it really matter that she is on her cell phone for [trails off]... I do think that she needs to go to bed at a set time at night but we are always fighting about what that time should be" (AnnMarie).

AnnMarie suggests that if Prue is getting good marks at school and her education is not suffering, then perhaps it is not important that the boundaries around cell phone usage are inflexible. In this interaction, AnnMarie yields some of her power to Prue for doing well at school. There is a complex exchange of resistance and yielding to power, as ultimately mother and daughter both self regulate to remain 'good girls'.

'Good mothers' maintain the current state of nations by raising good children who are 'good and obedient' daughters (Lawler, 2004; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Like the other mothers in this study, AnnMarie's regulates her own mothering in order to produce the best possible outcomes in autonomy for her daughter. This is in line with Walkerdine & Lucey's (1989) analysis that mothers essentially try to raise daughters to not only be compliant children but also good citizens. Daughters who are 'good girls' do well at school pose no threat to social order by delinquency (Lawler, 2004). However, AnnMarie needs to set boundaries in a way so as not to compromise the intimacy or friendship they share. Prue on the other hand will resist her mother's power as she tests where the boundaries are and how firm they actually are.

AnnMarie acknowledges that these particular interactions are in many ways struggles for power and she sees her ability to be consistent as a determinant for how much she needs to exert her authority over Prue:

“...if I say to her ‘That is that and that’s the end of it’, she will listen, she always does. But you know if she sees that I’m wavering then she comes in for the kill...” (AnnMarie).

Further, it would appear that Prue can use her mother’s inconsistency as a ‘loop hole’ in her mother’s authority. Each ‘good girl’s’ performance is informed by the other’s. AnnMarie is a ‘good girl’ as she employs the skills of the sensitive mother and does not have to break the illusion of autonomy (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). Furthermore, Prue is a ‘good girl’ when she internalises the self-regulation and is obedient and compliant.

For AnnMarie to be a ‘good girl’ as a mother she needs to be firm with Prue in setting boundaries but she must at the same time be reasonable enough to let those boundaries move occasionally when Prue performs as a ‘good girl’ too.

“I set all these discipline things and then after a week, ‘cos I said to her you know a month without your cell phone, but after a week I said to her, and maybe that is not a good thing, but I said to her I can see that you are not sulking that you are being co-operative at home and whatever and you have listened to what I have said to you, so we wont make it a month we will make it two weeks. And you can have your cell phone back but you have got to stop at a certain time, and you... and so we negotiated like that” (AnnMarie).

When Prue is a ‘good girl’ that is, when she learns to co-operate and not sulk then she is able to get her mother to shift the boundaries of discipline. By removing Prue’s cell phone as a privilege, AnnMarie is asserting her power over Prue as a means to discipline her. When Prue does not resist this and proves to be a ‘good girl’, the sanction is lifted. In this interaction, both mother and daughter are learning to self-regulate within this mode of discipline.

Claims for shifting authority and power in the relationship are only possible for daughters because of the conceptualisation of mother/ daughter as best friend. Prue is able to stake a

claim to power precisely because of the positioning of her mother as friend and similarly AnnMarie has to employ methods of less overt regulation because her own role as mother is not as embedded in traditional forms of authority. Particular forms of regulation appear to operate in a similar mode in Lyndall's home as Lyndall implies that because her mother is her best friend that she can in some ways regulate her mother. Lyndall is able to assert her own authority through the knowledge she appears to hold (as a well educated young woman) and Lyndall feels she is able to regulate her mother's parenting in ways that daughters who do not consider their mother their best friend cannot. Moreover, Lyndall suggests that she can make recommendations for her mother's parenting in ways that she cannot with her father:

"I...definitely don't speak to him about the...arguments that they've had. I don't go up to him and say well... 'You shouldn't have done that!'... I have in the past voiced my opinion and kind of ended up with me and my dad having a conflict...I used to kind of say he [Lyndall's brother] needed more discipline 'cos he's the only boy...and...my brother, when he was young, he was very naughty... So I used to always moan about it and say 'Well guys, discipline him 'cos he's you know, he shouldn't hit girls', kind of thing. My dad would tell me that you know it's not my place that I should dictate how they you know should be parents...and we used to fight about that a lot" (Lyndall).

It is thus argued that daughters who position their mother as their best friend can negotiate certain authorities typically reserved for 'adults' in the home, such as discipline. Lyndall's father reacts to Lyndall's suggestion for parenting by reminding her of her place in the home. By contrast, the relationship that Lyndall has with her mother differs:

"We often have arguments like I will kind of tell her I don't think that she should react to my dad in a certain situation 'cos I don't believe its right for my dad to treat her like that...So sometimes her inconsistent behaviour like with my dad like I will have arguments with about how it should be" (Lyndall).

Contextual factors outside of the home, such as education, an increase in women's rights and shifts in what is believed to constitute appropriate and 'good' mothering work to produce a relationship that is defined by its apparent equality.

Particular forms of regulation (both of self and other) work to produce interactions in the home that appear to function on the level of equality, and are indeed gendered. Daughters can actively construct their own 'good girl' role as they learn what to include in talk with mothers. Prue regulates what she talks to her mother about so that she does not disrupt AnnMarie's 'good girl' image of her. This ensures that she can negotiate better terms around boundary decisions her mother makes:

"I know that I could never tell her, so we can't really have that conversation [And what do you think would happen if you did tell her?] She wouldn't let me go to parties or anything where she would suspect that I would have anything to drink [So she would clamp down on your freedom] Ja. And its something I really love is my freedom, like going to places without my mom worrying. And I really don't want that to be taken away from me" (Prue).

For Prue, telling her mother certain things would limit her being able to access the freedoms she has currently; these freedoms allow her being able to go out without her mother worrying about what she may be doing at these parties. For Prue failing to disclose particular bits of information about her life ensures that she maintains a particular set of freedoms. For AnnMarie, making particular freedoms available is dependent on receiving performances from Prue both in the obvious domain of schoolwork and in other performances of compliance such as not sulking and being cooperative.

Similar to Prue, Olive suggests that when her parents make their displeasure in her actions obvious, she actively monitors and self-regulates her reactions to them:

“So I can’t really umm I can’t really get to, I can’t really get angry with them and...hold it against them. I’m actually resigned to the fact okay, its fine I won’t go out...And now it’s even without them saying it its that unconscious like ‘oh you are going out again?’ and that having to consider their feelings again and having to you know adapt to it” (Olive).

Here Olive is referring to the fact that having moved back home has made particular freedoms more constrained. Her parents are not always happy about her going out and she prefers not to get angry and resist this. Olive’s self-regulation is similar in many ways to Prue and Lyndall as each has learnt that the best path to freedom and autonomy is self-regulation.

Palesa suggests what happens when ‘good girls’ try to break through the illusion of autonomy in her home:

“Sometimes I try to explain, but when she is angry I can’t do anything ‘cos then I know I will end up shouting back at her. So I just keep quiet and I will be angry and I will lock myself in my room” (Palesa: on fighting with her mother).

Rather than daughters making their own anger explicit, many of the women in this study withhold their anger or resistance in order to maintain the relationship that they have with their mothers. In particular, a great deal of withholding as a means to self-regulate and arrange interactions between mother and daughter occurred around issues surrounding sexuality.

4.4.4 Being / Becoming a ‘good girl’: Sexuality

Having a mother/daughter, that one considers being more ‘like a friend’ is useful for all the ways it is possible to move around traditionally contentious issues. It has been argued that women as either mother or daughter face a range of conflicts that they will have to negotiate (Aapola et al., 2005). Some of these conflicts include negotiating issues around sexuality (as teenagers), independence from their mothers (as young adults) and issues

around dependency as their mothers' age (Lawler, 2000). 'Friend-like' interactions made possible through talk/ disclosure can obscure the often-difficult power relations associated with these possible conflicts.

For Lyndall, 'vulgar details' of going out are omitted in her talk with her mother Nadine:

"With the best friend its easier to go into the nitty gritty details about the boyfriend ...You know with my mom I do go into detail...but you have respect for one another ...You are not going to explain something to someone in its really vulgar sense...If you got really drunk in a nightclub, you're not going to tell her exactly what you had to drink, or the way you were falling over the stairs. You know you fell backwards on the dance floor...but you may talk to your best friend about that kind of thing... With my mom I will maybe say you know well obviously I drank quite a bit, and then that's okay for her, she doesn't kind of need to know all of that...its almost...a sense of respect as to not kind of...maybe not respect, but kind of not going into the details...I mean it's, it's best friends. Or friends like to go into detail, whereas I might not be able to go into detail ... she knows enough about it to know I can talk openly about it...so I think that's in a sense how different we are at communicating" (Lyndall).

For Lyndall the omission of details in their 'vulgar' sense is about many things. First, she suggests that this is about 'respect': she does not want to offend her mom by 'going into the details'. In some ways, this respect is also about maintaining credibility and not compromising freedoms. She wins in all ways as she maintains her 'good girl' status that in many ways feeds this 'friendship'.

Second Lyndall suggests that the difference between her not telling her mother everything and her mother not asking everything is about a difference in communication styles. In this analysis, it is asserted that Lyndall's mother does indeed listen in a way that Lyndall would perceive as non-judgemental. However, what is important to consider is

the way in which this non-judgemental stance is dependent on the silences in the telling. Lyndall does not tell her mother the 'vulgar details' because this would certainly jeopardise the trust and confidence that Lyndall enjoys. To continue being a 'good girl' Lyndall needs to remain credible, and responsible. Similarly, her mother does not *ask* for details, maintaining her non-imposing stance and the possibilities for friendship.

For these women, the belief in trustworthiness and confidence rest on the understanding that daughters will not reveal particular desires that could threaten to destabilise their mothers' non-imposing stance. In particular, AnnMarie recalls her experience in negotiating contraceptive pill usage: Helen had committed to making the pill available to AnnMarie if she needed it and this commitment worked well to secure the possibility for friendship as AnnMarie interpreted their relationship as open enough to negotiate pill usage. However, when AnnMarie approached her mother for the pill her mother engaged in attempts to overtly regulate her:

"I remember that night clearly in my head, how difficult it was to ask her...She said, oh you know I think you are too young, I think you should wait, and I don't think that he is the right person, and ja she was quite open. And it had actually been a huge thing to actually come out and ask... uh you know its quite embarrassing thing to ask your mother even though she is so open" (AnnMarie).

Helen's role as 'friend' to her daughter makes particular resources, like birth control, available. As a mother, Helen appears as someone her daughter can talk to, they can be more open with each other (though not always entirely), discipline appears as less painful and overt than it does for the 'non-sensitive mother' and negotiation seems possible. On the other hand, when faced with a particular decision as Helen was (her daughter wanted to have sex at an age she didn't agree with) she had to make a decision to either go with it and allow her daughter the pill (as she had promised) or to step in *as a mother*, assert her power and attempt to prevent her daughter making a 'mistake'. The space for negotiating

sexuality appears to close down and a struggle for sexual agency (for AnnMarie) continues in the silence between AnnMarie and Helen.

The irony is that despite Helen's attempt to prevent a 'mistake', AnnMarie reads this as a mistake nonetheless and they each are faced with a conflict. In dealing with this conflict, AnnMarie resisted her mother and negotiates using the pill on her own. Internalising the disappointment her mother felt has led to her making a different choice with her daughter:

“With my daughter, I'm also open about sex... and I have also said to her I kind of want to learn from my mistakes with my mom... you must be open with me, and I'm sure I will be cross when you do tell me, but I will try my absolute hardest not to show it” (AnnMarie).

We are yet to know how this actually will work out as Prue has not yet approached her mother to use the pill, but what is most important for this analysis is that although disclosure can make particular negotiations possible, it is not always non-conflictual.

Similar to AnnMarie and her mother, Laleti suggests that the relationship she had with her mother made negotiating matters related to sexuality possible. Having been able to negotiate arrangements around marriage and pregnancy outside of marriage with her mother was possible for Laleti because of the relationship she had with her mother. For a young Zulu woman, to fall pregnant outside of marriage is still shameful and the correct action is to marry as soon as possible. This often means *ilobolo* is payable as well as payment of damages to the young woman's family for the dishonour. Laleti describes how she was able to address this issue with her mother:

“I discovered...that I was pregnant...Now that was an issue...that meant that either I get married to this guy, or I don't keep this baby...I knew I was going to keep the baby. I was worried about my dad, not about my mom... So he [boyfriend] went home...to explain...what it is that has happened...That eased

my fathers you know whatever...Now, there was conflict between me and my boyfriend, he was there to pay labola and get everything done there. Now that is not something that I wanted definitely...I said, 'If you go down home, you just pay for...' We call it damages you know 'Umm so you just pay for that'....In fact that is what he did...Mom was very proud of me also you know...Then [mother] came in at that time to ask me, now why am I not getting married to this guy and that was where I felt you know now she is starting again, she is pushing it.... I then kind of said, you know what, you know me...I have nothing, basically, I can't go into anything marriage. Who am I? What is that I will be bringing in the marriage? ...I still have to study. I still have to be the person that I want to be. She just laughed you know, she just laughed at me, and said, 'Ah there you go' you know...So she kind of welcomed me, and she supported me through my pregnancy" (Laleti).

Laleti's mother's acceptance of her daughter's decision reflects a basis of respect and negotiation between equals, and for Zulu women this is a unique interaction for as Laleti suggests, damages have to be paid for the dishonour that it brings to a young woman's family. Laleti was able to negotiate something that ordinarily may have proved difficult.

Social processes are constantly at work to monitor, regulate and shape subjectivities as a means to protect and maintain a particular state of social order (Lawler, 2000; Rose, 1999; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). In this analysis, connecting the experiences of mothers and daughters, as 'good girls' with representations of what constitute an acceptable female subjectivity is important. Interactions between mother and daughter such as reasoning, negotiating, and talking are each modes of and attempts to engage in regulation. This is not to say that women are merely subjects in an overwhelming sea of regulation. Women actively negotiate the roles they fulfil for themselves. Women choose to be a particular mother/ daughter for the ways that it makes negotiating this relationship

possible and the ways in which it makes the construction of particular female subjectivities possible.

5. CONCLUSION

“so many analyses of the mother-daughter relationship collapse the mother’s story into that of the daughter: the daughter is seen as possessing a privileged insight into the relationship, and her account is seen as giving a ‘true’ representation of the mother...much feminist work to date has been a ‘daughters story’... in which mothers have often been constituted as other to the daughterly (feminist) self. Within many of these accounts, mothers are represented as the guarantors of the social order: the daughter must struggle against the mother’s influence if she is to achieve autonomy” (Lawler, 2000, p. 15).

The participants in this study construct their mother-daughter relationships as friendship and the study explores the meanings that this construction has for these women. The reformulation of the relationship in these terms entails a challenge to the power dynamics traditionally associated with the mother-daughter relationship and the assumption of equality provides the implicit framework for rethinking possibilities for women’s (mothering and other) roles. This explicit assertion of friendship and equality is explored and questioned through three primary thematic lines: 1) talk and disclosure; 2) gendered relationships; and 3) regulation.

The assumption of equality expressed through the rubric of friendship suggests that these women genuinely *do* consider their mother/ daughter to be *like* a friend, although they each show that this conceptualisation is limited in specific ways and is obviously different to the other friendships that each woman has. This analysis reveals that it is by no means coincidental that women are *now* referring to their mother/daughter as their best friend. The forms of relating within the conceptualisation of mother-daughter relationships are friend-like in nature and this rubric of friendship suggests a shift not only in particular positionings within an individualised domestic setting between mother and daughter, but also connects with broader social shifts. The parallel drawn between

mothering/ daughtering and friendship is an indication of global and national shifts not only in political discourses of rights and democracy, but also in terms of socio-economic positionings available to women, especially younger women who are able to access forms of education not typically available to their mothers or their grandmothers. It seems probable that the changes particularly in younger women's roles, changes the power dynamics between generations of women that serves to equalise the mother-daughter relationship in some ways. This study does not suggest that a new democracy makes it possible for all women everywhere to make this particular assertion (of mother/ daughter as friend), rather that *these* women are able to do so, and this must be located within broader social processes and popular discourses that produce, mediate and reproduce these forms of relating.

Popularisations of child-centred forms of parenting (derived at least in part from developmental psychology's constructions of 'sensitive' mothering and the critical process of attachment) arrange not only the conditions for mothering but provide the impetus for children to challenge the authority that their parents have traditionally held. Autonomy is given a new lease on life through the guise of 'equality' for it would appear in this study that the two are complementary. The participants in this study, particularly the younger women have a strong sense of individual autonomy, and this enables them to assert themselves as equals to their mothers. Autonomy and democracy are two imperceptible forces that work to produce a particular form of relating between mother and daughter in the home: that of 'friendship'.

Women who are able to position themselves as equals, through conceptualising the mother-daughter relationship as friendship, claim that in their mother-daughter relationship there is a form of relating that is 'open'. To this end, talk and disclosure is the pivot around which the rubric of friendship spins. The levels of disclosure in these relationships differ remarkably from 'other mother-daughter relationships' and these

women suggest that this is predominantly the key difference, not only from other mother-daughter relationships but also other relationships in the home, particularly those with fathers. For *all* the women, talk performed a similar function of securing intimacy between mother and daughter. But talk includes silences and, indeed, in some senses it was *not talking* that made intimacy more likely.

Daughters feel a need to control the boundaries of their lives from blurring with the boundaries of mothers' lives and so talk acts as an important marker for the role that each woman fulfils in the relationship. Moreover, mothers in particular also exercise control over the details that they share with daughters indicating that they also withhold talk. However, the motivation for mother and daughter are different. Daughters appear to withhold talk as a means to protect themselves from possible intrusions by their mothers; while mothers withhold talk as a means to protect daughters from the stresses of life that they experience. In this sense, it would appear that talk performs the function to ensure that mothers remain sensitive to daughters' needs and 'protect' daughters from being 'burdened' by the details that go with being a mother and a woman. Some of these details include menopause, divorce, marriage problems, having to deal with children leaving the family home and other developmental issues that mothers in this study continue to negotiate. This would suggest that mothers' identity is in fact a constantly negotiated identity, a finding that although not surprising, challenges current fixed notions of women's identity as locked at the point of becoming a mother in new ways.

Talking and disclosure work equally with the counter-processes of listening to produce increased levels of intimacy between mother and daughter. In particular talking is the key activity shared by mother and daughter (that even when mother and daughter go to coffee or shopping they do so to talk). Intimacy is maintained by the counter-processes of talking and listening. Indeed listening appears to function to increase intimacy through the assumption that mothers listen non-judgementally. What is talked about, and what is

omitted in talk is pivotal in how non-judgemental mothers can be. Important perhaps are the ways in which talk and silences are two processes at work that enable openness but only to a point. The participants limit talk and certain silences enhance intimacy between mother and daughter. In this way, it is possible for mother and daughter to continue being 'friends'.

It is imperative to point out that the assertion that talk makes support possible is qualified by the fact that daughters appear to benefit more from talk (and the support that this yields) than mothers, as flow of support is particularly skewed. This is linked to fixed versions of identity in a developmental sequence that, once motherhood has been reached, the full set of milestones, and sequence has been completed. The assertion made by Billington et al. (1998) that identity needs to be understood as perpetually transitional, indeed "liminal" (p. 68) is well supported by the experiences of these mothers. Each of the mothers in this study have varying issues that they continue to face not necessarily connected to the role of being a mother. Daughters in this study rarely had insights into their mothers' experiences outside of being a mother. This works to reproduce the mother/child dyad and it reproduces the asymmetries in support. This thematic line leads to the understanding that daughters benefit more from talk as daughters are understood to be 'identities in progress' whereas mothers are presumed to have reached identity, they apparently are 'at maturity' (read autonomy). In this way, talk is centred predominantly around the daughter's developmental milestones (as it is assumed she still must complete her developmental sequence) with mothers' female subjectivity often being obscured in these interactions.

The centrality of daughters' developmental experiences in mother-daughter interactions works to benefit daughters rather than mothers and as long as the mother's subjectivity remains obscured, daughters can continue to enjoy the protection this offers them. Moreover, mothers are able to protect their daughters from the 'burdens' of their personal

experiences such as divorce, separation, menopause, loneliness and so forth. What is apparent, however, is that in a bid to protect daughters from their issues, mothers are able to remain in control and not reveal their weaknesses as women to their daughters. Autonomy finds the ultimate expression in control as mothers regulate how much of their own emotional load they reveal to their daughters. Mothers' sensitivity works as much to respond to daughters' needs as it does to protect them, while simultaneously giving the mother her own sense of autonomy, even if this obscures her own feminine subjectivity (Walkerdine & Lucey 1989) and the unfinished nature of her own identity (Billington et al., 1998).

The nature of interactions appear to be largely focussed on what daughters need and in many ways this is about imbalances in support given and taken within the mother-daughter relationship but further to this, is the understanding that such forms of interacting can work to inevitably exclude fathers from the relationship. Fathers are interpreted as being absent in particular ways by their daughters but what is particularly apparent however is that this 'absence' is maintained by the relationships that daughters have with their mothers. The level of intimacy made possible through talk, and the particularly gendered form of relating that daughters have with both their mothers and their fathers, positions fathers as 'emotionally' defective. This seems based on naturalised understandings that many daughters and mothers in this study have of the roles that men and women have in the home and outside of it.

While daughters in this study articulated that their fathers were absent (either physically or emotionally), it is apparent that fathers' absences are acceptable, indeed necessary as when questioned about the kind of father they would one day want for their children. Some daughters in this study reproduced the understanding that fathers' absences are 'normal' indeed desirable for this implies that men provide a steady and stable source of income that can guarantee the family's survival. However, there were contradictions in

participants' understandings of the role an ideal father has in the home and the role their own fathers/ husbands/ partners have in the home. Participants all claim in some form or another that their fathers are absent from the home and that an ideal father would spend more time in the home. This is contradicted by daughters' understandings that fathers' absences in the home appear necessary, indeed 'normal' for fathers are the 'natural' breadwinners in the home. These understandings all work in a complex way to maintain the absences that daughters interpret in their relationships with their fathers and contribute to the argument made by Macleod (2001) that understandings about the role fathers and mothers play are reduced to naturalised female/ male dualities.

It would appear from the above exploration of gender that the assertions of equality that women can make with their mothers are not possible with fathers. This may suggest that as far as masculinity and femininity go, this divide still exists in a naturalised and strongly regulative way. Moreover, the roles available to women still appear to be located primarily within mothering, although there are more spaces opening up within a developing socio-economic climate. Regulation of roles that are available to women emerged over and again through this study. The particular role that these women have with their daughters is a version of sensitive mothering as argued by Walkerdine & Lucey (1989). Particular versions of mothering circulate in what Rose (1999) has referred to as expert psychological knowledges. These versions of mothering are manufactured for and are reproduced by women who seek to fulfil the normative and non-pathologised roles of mothering set out by these knowledges. To this end, mothering has taken on a particular brand, a version of sensitive mothering. The mothers in this study suggest that their own mothering role is partly about enacting a different mothering role from *their* mothers, and partly about the kind of daughters that they have.

A return to an earlier quote from Rose (1999) loops this study back to understandings about the role of developmental theory as well as mothers and daughters themselves in

shaping this particular relationship. Rose (1999) argues that developmental theory cannot be cited as an 'all-knowing' knowledge that exerts its power *over* subjects. Rather, persons find subject positions within particular frameworks in which they can negotiate roles for themselves as, "technologies of subjectivity...exist in a kind of symbiotic relationship with what one might term 'techniques of the self', the ways in which we are enabled by means of the languages, criteria and techniques offered to us, to act upon our bodies, souls thoughts, and conduct in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health and fulfilment" (p. 11). The women in this study do engage in performances of 'good girl' behaviour but these performances, with whatever limitations identified in this study, still represent a shift from the traditional conflicted and hyper-intense relationships usually depicted in developmental texts (e.g. Orbach & Eichenbaum, 1993).

Definitions of 'good' and 'bad' mothering work to keep women, as mothers, constructing and enacting the role of mother in particular ways that make it possible for this relationship to be conceptualised as friendship. Discipline and regulation ensure that mother and daughter interact with each other through the performances of 'good girl' behaviour. For mothers this is about using regulation through sensitive mothering practices to monitor not only daughters but also themselves. In this mode, mothers do not impose upon their daughters, but rather give their daughters space in which to grow autonomously. Furthermore, daughters are expected to not disappoint mothers and this compliance ensures that sensitive mothering can continue. For daughters being a 'good girl' is about compliance, obedience, and credibility.

Significantly, daughters do not consider their mothers' development as possible trajectories for their *own* development and this makes it possible for daughters to challenge their mother's authority and assert their own position as her equal. Paradoxically, it is the rubric of friendship that destabilises the traditional forms of authority in the mother's role and requires the use of less overt forms of regulation with

daughters. Each woman's role/ performance as a 'good girl' informs the other and makes for interactions characterised by intimacy and this makes it possible for these women to refer to their mothers/ daughters as 'best friends'.

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